

Attitudes to Gender and Race in France during World War One

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Summary:

This thesis examines the impact that the First World War had on French thinking about race and gender. It argues ideas about those two categories were strongly linked at the time. It argues that the often dramatic changes of the war were understood within a framework of pre-war ideas which helped to both determine and explain the behaviour of different sexes and different races during the conflict. These ideas were adaptable and sometimes contradictory which allowed them to be utilised to describe changing circumstances in ways that did not undermine traditional thinking. While there was uncertainty over the categories of gender and race during the war, it largely followed the pattern of pre-war debates and resulted in little more disruption to established ideas than those debates had.

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Contents

| | |
|---|--------|
| Introduction | p. 2 |
| Chapter 1 | |
| The Racial Other | p. 21 |
| Chapter 2 | |
| Race and Nationality | p. 83 |
| Chapter 3 | |
| World War One and Gender Relations | p. 141 |
| Chapter 4 | |
| Gender, Race and Employment | p. 211 |
| Conclusion | p. 293 |
| Bibliography | p. 303 |

Introduction

In May 1917, a police report in Le Havre stated that a common sentiment in the munitions factory there was that

If this continues, there will not be any men left in France; so why are we fighting? So that Chinese, Arabs, or Spaniards can marry our wives and daughters and share out the France for which we'll all, sooner or later, get ourselves killed at the front.¹

The police concluded that this attitude demonstrated jealousy of both foreign workers and allied soldiers. Not only does the statement betray a fear of a loss of national identity; it also provides evidence of the sexual insecurity that was prevalent during the war. The French feared that women's new found independence would lead to the abandonment of their husbands. For the soldiers at the front there was the added factor of long-term separation from their wives and girlfriends while they risked their lives on a daily basis. This meant that their loved ones were often unable to comprehend the suffering on the front, shielded as they were by distance and censorship.

In 1918, Dr Louis Fiaux, a social reformer and expert on prostitution, described the social crisis that he perceived had resulted from the movement of so many French men to the frontlines.

Quelles conséquences ne devaient point avoir ces exodes d'hommes par masses, ces délaissements équivalents des femmes. Ces innombrables foyers familiaux rompus et dispersés, les hommes mariés redevenus célibataires, les jeunes gens non mariés éloignés de leurs habitudes de cœur ou de leurs arrangements, les circonstances du célibat viril comme les conditions ordinaires de la prostitution féminine bouleversées, sans omettre tous les vides incertains, tous les vides définitifs laissés à l'arrière par les prisonniers, les disparus et les morts de l'avant, sans oublier surtout la crise économique de gêne et de misère s'abattant sur les femmes du prolétariat réduites par milliers et milliers aux plus insuffisantes ressources, quelque intelligente et humaine que soit l'intervention des secours publics. A

¹ John N. Horne, "Immigrant Workers in France during World War I" in *French Historical Studies* 14-1 (Spring 1985), p. 85.

l'ensemble et aux détails de ce trop véridique tableau, comment s'étonner de ce bouleversement des mœurs?²

A M. Marchetti, speaking in 1919 at a veterans meeting in Marseille, lamented that while the soldiers were fighting, “d'autres à l'arrière, parmi lesquels beaucoup d'étrangers, s'enrichissaient scandaleusement à nos dépens.”³

These quotations describe a world where dislocation caused by war resulted in comprehensive disturbance of social norms. The absence of many of France's men had created a space that could potentially be filled by women and foreigners performing roles that were not those conventionally expected of them. The question addressed here is whether this dislocation resulted in any significant changes in how French society perceived women and foreigners, or whether existing discourses on gender, race and nationality survived the turmoil of the war.

The destruction and disruption caused in Europe by the Great War was vast, and the imprint it left in politics and individual consciousness was longstanding. For Eric Hobsbawm the war “marked the breakdown of the (western) civilization of the nineteenth century.”⁴ The idea of the war as marking a decisive shift in history is a staple of the historiography of the period, often with substantial justification. The debates over gender, nationality and race have been no different.

Historians have demonstrated that attitudes towards race and gender are an essential constitutive element of any society. The French believed that the governments and citizens of foreign countries acted in ways determined by their racial and national characteristics; this belief shaped relations between France and its neighbours. The growing presence of foreigners on French soil only emphasised the importance of this issue. There were now individuals living in France whose motivation and morality were believed to be not just different from the French, but potentially capable of undermining France's own national characteristics. Meanwhile there was scarcely a

² Louis Fiaux, *L'Armée et la Police des Mœurs*, Paris: Libraire Félix Alcan (1918) p. vi.

³ AN F/7/13243, 17 March, 1919.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes; The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*. St Ives: Abacus (1995) p. 6.

relationship of any sort in France that was not moulded by both accepted and contested gender relations.

My conception of gender relations is similar to that expressed by Denise Riley where she defines “women” as

historically, discursively constructed and always relative to other categories that themselves change; “women” is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of “women” isn’t to be relied upon;⁵

Amongst the “other categories” that Riley mentions, race is a primary example. French racial thinking had little, if any, basis in any objective reality, but was constructed amongst an accumulation of discourses arising from myriad scientific theories, arbitrary designations, geo-political history and simple prejudice. The huge variety of discourses in politics, in literature, in the press, in art, in everyday conversation, that served to construct the categories of gender and race inevitably led to a variety of perceptions towards those categories. Indeed the notion of gender and race as contested ideologies is crucial to an understanding of public attitudes towards them. During the First World War - as before and since - there was no single, unquestioned social view of the “natural order of things”. While many conceptions held almost universal sway, considerable scope for debate appeared on some issues and within virtually every element of society. For example the idea that whites were different and superior to non-whites was considered a given, but the extent of this superiority and the ways in which it manifested itself was more controversial.⁶ This thesis is predicated on the contention that there was a multitude of public opinions, and that their interaction was a major determining factor in the history of the period.

The other important issue here is that although these ideologies were historically contested and constructed, they were expressed and acted upon as if they were secure,

⁵ Denise Riley, *‘Am I That Name’: Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History*. Basingstoke: MacMillan (1988) pp. 1-2.

⁶ In using the term “non-whites” I follow Tyler Stovall who argues that while the description is problematic, it offers the closest approximation to the reductionist way in which race was seen at the time. Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line Behind The Lines: Racial Violence in France During the Great War” in *American Historical Review* 1998 103(3) p. 737 n. 2.

natural and constant. Joan Scott argues convincingly that the “meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine” is “categorically and unequivocally” asserted through normative statements. Despite the contestation of these concepts that underpin these statements, “the position that emerges as dominant [...] is stated as the only possible one. Subsequent history is written as if these normative positions were the product of social consensus rather than conflict.”⁷

The apparent dichotomy between conceptions of gender and race as natural, unchanging and reliable categories and simultaneously sites of contestation amongst a variety of ideologies is crucial to explaining any evolution in basic ideological assumptions about these categories. The availability of alternative norms allowed the potential for change over time instead of imposing an ahistorical consistency. Yet the crucial role that that gender and race played in the French understanding of their society and their belief that this foundation was a solid, natural one meant that any change was a difficult and inherently traumatic process. Hence any significant change in attitude in these matters was unlikely over a short period of time, and any change or perceived change was likely to be accompanied with much anguished questioning of what concepts *could* be relied upon.

While this study does focus primarily on discourses of gender and race as opposed to social experience, it does not argue that discourse is entirely constitutive of what it describes. The attitudes expressed by the French had a direct impact on how they lived their lives. So a discourse that presented the courage of black men as savage and reckless while that of white men was calm and rational manifested itself in a French military doctrine that suggested that colonial troops were best suited to assaults on enemy positions, but were unreliable at combating enemy attacks. In turn the putting into practice of this doctrine manifested itself in the relatively high proportion of casualties suffered by African troops during offensive operations.⁸ The process was not all one way either, while discourses often are self-reinforcing, the lived experiences of the population could and did allow them to modify their views. In certain areas of thought the events of the First World War did have a significant

⁷ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press (1988) p. 43.

impact on people's attitudes on issues such as pacifism or depopulation. This study seeks to understand why, despite often significant differences in the behaviour of women and foreigners from that suggested in pre-war discourses concerning them, there were not comparable changes in the discourses on those subjects.

The focus on two, potentially discrete, categories: gender and race; is important for a number of reasons. In part, this is because the ways in which pre-war assumptions were maintained was similar in both instances, the behaviour of both women and foreigners was consistently viewed and analysed through preconceptions that existed before the war. More crucial is that the two categories were frequently linked at the time, in scientific discourse, popular rhetoric and public policy.

Nancy Stepan has argued that

So familiar and indeed axiomatic had the analogies concerning 'lower races,' 'apes,' and 'women' become by the end of the nineteenth century that in his major study of male-female differences in the human species, [Havelock] Ellis took almost without comment as the standards of which to measure the 'typical female' on the one hand 'the child' and on the other 'the ape,' 'the savage,' and the 'aged human.'⁹

August Strindberg writing in 1895 quoted Darwin and craniologists to conclude that, "between the child, woman and the inferior races there exists a not negligible analogy."¹⁰ Alphonse Séché, who wrote on the subject of black soldiers during the war, claimed that female nurses got on well with wounded Senegalese because of their shared sentimentality. "Les noirs sont des grands enfants, de grands enfants susceptibles, sentimentaux et orgueilleux." "Les femmes (nurses of Senegalese soldiers) seront toujours sentimentales, et c'est heureux, car nous gagnons à cela des gardesmalades incomparables."¹¹ William Vogt wrote in *Le Sexe faible*, published in

⁸ These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, pp. 67-71.

⁹ Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science" in David Theo Goldberg ed. *Anatomy of Racism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1990), p. 52.

¹⁰ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1986), p. 170.

¹¹ Alphonse Séché, *Les Noirs; d'après des documents officiels*. Paris: Payot & Cie (1919), p.37, p. 236.

1908, that “Les femmes étant comme certains juifs, partout où elles ont pris pied, sachez leur imposer silence”¹²

The two categories were often placed together in wartime legislation, notably when, in January 1917, a new system of pay was designed by Albert Thomas, with the (ultimately unsuccessful) aim of ensuring that female and foreign workers both gained the same wages as French men.¹³ When Blériot sought to lay off workers in 1918 it eliminated foreign and female labour along with its apprentices.¹⁴ Martha Hanna concludes in her work on the education system that women and foreigners were classified together.

Two themes emerge from these debates about standards, rigor, and academic competence in classical languages. The first was an ill-concealed tendency on the part of most scholars, including those who favored the educational advancement of young women, to categorize French women as “foreigners” within the confines of the university. Throughout the war years discussions about the education of French women arose only when the faculty were considering how to satisfy the academic needs of American men. Mingled with the belief that French women and American men had comparable abilities, aptitudes, and interests was the impulse to blame French women for declining standards.¹⁵

For French women themselves, foreigners remained a consistent point of reference, although often in a context that criticised society for placing women at a level equivalent, or even below that of foreigners. When Hélène Brion was charged for treason for distributing pacifist pamphlets, in her trial she claimed that it was unfair that “before the law I am not the equal of an illiterate black from Guadeloupe or the Ivory Coast.”¹⁶ In the socialist and feminist journal, *La Vague*, Marcelle Capy claimed that the situations in which women were working during the war meant that “L’Europe est tombée aux rangs de ces peuplades barbares où les femmes sont des bêtes de somme et des hommes des bêtes fauves.”¹⁷

12 Annelise Maugue, “Littérature antiféministe et angoisse masculine au tournant du siècle” in Christine Bard (ed.) *Un siècle d’antiféminisme*. Paris: Fayard (1999) p. 69.

13 Horne, “Immigrant Workers in France” p. 77.

14 Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industry, 1914-1939* Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1995) p. 186.

15 Martha Hanna, “French Women and American Men: “Foreign” Students at the University of Paris, 1915-1925” in *French Historical Studies* 22:1 (1999) pp. 110-111.

16 Quoted in Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee and Frans Coetzee, *World War I and European Society, a sourcebook*, Lexington MA, Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company (1995) p. 267.

17 *La Vague*, 5 January, 1918.

The belief that gender, race and nationality were linked, fixed categories was made most explicitly by the radical nineteenth century anthropologist and sociologist Vacher de Lapouge who claimed “The prince can no more make a Frenchman from a Greek or a Moroccan than he can bleach the skin of a negro, make round the eyes of a Chinaman or change a woman into a man.”¹⁸

Despite the ways in which discourses of race, gender and nationality intersected and overlapped, this essay does not seek to argue that the war affected each discourse in an identical way. Partly this is due to the different ways in which the discourses were structured and their functions in ordering French society and partly it is due to the different experiences lived by men and women, French and foreigners, whites and non-whites. For example, because France’s colonial subjects were under the control of metropolitan authorities, their utilisation in the war closely followed existing conceptions about their nature and abilities. Similar control of French women was much more difficult, and that of non-French subjects non-existent. Thus these groups had much more scope to act in ways contrary to accepted discourse and posed a significantly greater threat to that discourse.

The early consensus over women’s position in society arose out of contemporary views that the war advanced the status of women immeasurably, far more than decades of feminist activity preceding it. The oft-lauded heroism of women in coping without their menfolk, and the successful way they adjusted to new tasks convinced men that women were capable of playing a much wider role in society than previously afforded. The first significant challenge to this view came from James MacMillan who saw the war as having a conservative impact, reinforcing an image of women as housewives and mothers. Michelle Perrot argued that not only was the war not emancipatory, but that it halted a progressive movement that was gathering momentum in the years before the war.¹⁹

¹⁸ Neil MacMaster, *Racism in Europe, 1870-2000*, Basingstoke: Palgrave (2001) p. 32.

¹⁹ James MacMillan, *Housewife or Harlot? The Place of Women in French Society, 1870-1940* Brighton: Harvester (1981) Michelle Perrot, “The New Eve and the Old Adam: Changes in French Women’s Condition at the Turn of the Century” in Margaret R. Higonnet et al (eds) *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1987).

Other historians have argued that while the war did disrupt traditional norms, that these changes were not durable and that the immediate post-war period saw the reconstruction of gender in a conservative manner. In this interpretation the division between the troops on the frontline and the home front was crucial. This division was seen in gendered terms, with the home front seen as a feminine counterpart to the male world of the trenches. The soldiers, angered by the lack of comprehension of their sufferings by those at home and fearing sexual betrayal by women, developed a great hostility towards the social developments that the war was believed to have fostered. This hostility resulted in post-war antagonism towards the social progress of women.²⁰

Margaret and Patrice Higonnet argue that

[I]f we perceive the wartime changes in women's roles as a realignment of social territory that produces [...] greater social equality, then the rapid retreat from those advances during the immediate postwar years seems puzzling.²¹

They offer an explanation through the device of the double helix. In this interpretation the female strand is intertwined with the male strand, with the two strands in opposition with the female strand positioned in subordination to the male strand.²²

Whatever changes occur in wartime is ultimately inconsequential.

In the long run, however, the dynamic of gender subordination remains as it was. After the war, the lines of gender can therefore be redrawn to conform to the prewar map of relations between men's and women's roles. Even when material conditions for women differ after the war, the fundamental devaluation of the tasks assigned to them remains.²³

20 These historical debates are well summed up by Françoise Thébaud, "The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division" in Françoise Thébaud (ed) *A History of Women, Vol. 5: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. (1994) pp. 21-75.

21 Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R Higonnet "The Double Helix" in Higonnet et al (eds) *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1987) p. 31.

22 Higonnet and Higonnet "The Double Helix" p. 34.

23 Higonnet and Higonnet "The Double Helix" p. 35.

Where this thesis differs from that approach is through a rejection of the idea that the war saw a breakdown in gender relations that was resolved by a retrospective post-war reinterpretation of women's activities in traditional terms. Instead, it argues that throughout the war the activities of women were interpreted in a manner consistent with pre-war conceptions of gender relations. While the roles women performed in wartime often differed significantly from those that existing conceptions of gender would prescribe, such roles were offered, accepted and understood by both women and men within the framework of those conceptions. Not only were these conceptions flexible enough to withstand the ruptures caused by the conflict but also the key assumptions that underpinned them continued to be largely unthreatened. Laura Lee Downs has convincingly argued that in the metalworking industries of Britain and France the organisation and reorganisation of the labour process during the war was based upon employers' "conviction that male-female differences are stable and knowable". Although beliefs about gender difference were felt to be stable and natural, the multitude of assumptions contained considerable scope for incongruent and contradictory ideas. Downs argues that

sexual division was treated as a foundational principle of production and of shop-floor order. Yet that division shifted over time and from place to place in a way that suggested that this fundamental fact of life, bedrock of a factory pecking order, might not be natural and immutable, but rather a construction that required constant reinforcement if it was to endure.²⁴

It will be argued that Downs' argument is applicable beyond the metalworking industries. Traditional assumptions of gender roles informed all areas of French society, and even radical wartime change was understood in the context of those assumptions. The subordination of women to men in French hierarchies and the greater status automatically accorded to work carried out by men to that of women was one of these key assumptions, but it was by no means the only one. Amongst the other beliefs that informed French understandings of gender relations was a conviction that women had several innate characteristics, including being nurturing, patient, deft, sentimental, irrational and intellectually passive. These traits were repeatedly used to describe and understand the actions of women during the war. The

²⁴ Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, pp. 11-12.

sometimes contradictory nature of beliefs over sexual difference could be a source for unease; they also offered considerable scope for those beliefs to adjust and take in new historical realities, while retaining their normative force.

The debate over French attitudes towards those of other nationalities and races shows similar differences of opinion. It has been argued that the presence of other races in France in unprecedented numbers allowed these foreigners to dismantle beliefs amongst the French population that they were terrible savages and replace them with a more benevolent image of loyal colonial subjects, overgrown children to be patronised rather than feared. For historians like Phillip Dewitte and Robert Aldrich any changes that were made by the war were in this direction.²⁵ Dewitte claims that

[...] l'arrivée en métropole des tirailleurs, leurs contacts avec les indigènes de France: poilus, infirmières ou mairaines de guerre, ont fait évoluer les mentalités. Le stéréotype du 'bon nègre', doux, sociable et rieur, va bientôt prédominer. Après-guerre, l'Africain n'est plus ce sauvage effroyant, mais un 'grand enfant' naïf et tout disposé à recevoir 'la Civilisation'.²⁶

Aldrich argues much the same thing. "The heroism of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* during the war helped change the stereotypes of Africans, the jungle savage replaced by the smiling, brave soldier willing to sacrifice his life for France."²⁷

Tyler Stovall expresses the alternative interpretation:

For a variety of reasons, in certain contexts, people of color came to symbolize both the war in general and its deleterious impact on the French working class in particular, and some members of the latter targeted colonial labourers as an outlet for frustrations about the ongoing conflict.²⁸

Similarly, Gérard Noiriel has argued, "The First World War [...] radicalized distrust of all non-French individuals".²⁹

25 Phillip Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France, 1919-1939*. Paris: L'Harmattan (1985). Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion*. Basingstoke: Macmillan (1996).

26 Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, p. 12.

27 Aldrich, *Greater France*, p. 223.

28 Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines", p. 739-40.

29 Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot; Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1996) p. 61.

In examining these interpretations, this thesis suggests that many historians exaggerate the impact of the war on attitudes towards race and gender. It argues that the resilience and flexibility of existing discourses often allowed pre-war ideas to be maintained, despite the presence of many individuals acting in roles that could seem to challenge those discourses. Neither the disruptions of the war, nor the reaction to that disruption were able to fundamentally shift these entrenched ideas. Throughout the war, the actions of men and women of all nationalities were ordered and interpreted in terms that revealed an acceptance of inherent innate differences amongst them. This is not to deny human agency or to suggest that each individual was wholly bound by these discourses. What people experienced in the war could modify their views even on perceived “natural” categories like gender and race, and sometimes they did. The existence of competing discourses allowed each individual to find the position that seemed most accurate to them, amongst the discourses available to them. A continual process of construction and reconstruction of these categories enabled excluded groups to take on new roles and gave the scope for evolution of attitudes, but these changes were restricted by certain beliefs that remained constant. People’s responses to the war were expressed in ways that showed great continuity with the pre- and post-war period.

This study is based on a wide range of primary materials. The breadth of sources chosen represents a deliberate methodological choice to examine a variety of different attitudes, even at the risk of occasional lack of depth of analysis. This is a study of certain attitudes, and while it is hoped that these attitudes are representative, there is no claim for definitiveness. Geographically, again this study is intended to be as varied as possible, although the primary areas of study are the cities of Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon, Bordeaux and Nantes and their environs.

It draws heavily on newspapers; in particular major provincial newspapers, the conservative *Le Petit Marseillais* and *L'Ouest-Éclair*, the moderate *La Petite Gironde*, and the liberal *La Dépêche*. Others consulted include the conservative *L'Echo de Midi*, a newspaper of the colonial movement *La Dépêche Coloniale*, the

syndicalist *La Bataille*, and the socialist and feminist *La Vague*.³⁰ Although these newspapers spanned most of the political spectrum, on these issues there was rarely significant difference in their interpretations, and some journalists appeared in more than one publication. Pierre Mille for instance wrote columns in both the *Petit Marseillais* and *La Dépêche*. This focus on provincial newspapers is largely due to a desire to obtain a broader national perspective rather than one dominated by Paris, but also informed by the argument of Ross Collins that distance from Paris allowed provincial newspapers more freedom from the censor and they were able to report more objectively.³¹

Of course, opinions published in newspapers cannot be taken as a direct gauge of public opinion. Those who published and wrote in them are not representative either of their readership or of the public as a whole, either in terms of their social background or in terms of their views. However, as Pierre Purseigle has argued, what is revealing is the attempts of popular “newspapers to get the largest circulation possible thanks to their market-driven content, and thus on the dialectical relationship this implied with their readers.”³² Given this relationship, they can be seen as offering some indication of public opinion, at least among the newspaper reading public. In addition to this, even if they are not considered representative of general attitudes, examining changes in opinion (or the lack thereof) in newspapers is suggestive and significant in its own right.

The censorship of the war years does reduce the utility of newspapers somewhat; some of the more hostile commentary aimed at women and, especially, foreigners may have been excised by the censors, or by self-censorship on the part of the journalists themselves. For example, *La Vague* featured in 1918 a “Lettre de Roanne” which was cut by the censors to remove references to the foreigners who worked in the arsenal there, and the accusation that their employment went against France’s national interest.

30 From October 1915 the *Dépêche Coloniale* became *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*.

31 Ross F. Collins, “‘Cossacks Marching to Berlin!’ A New Look at French Journalism during the First World War in *American Journalism*, 18-4 (2001) pp. 29-44.

32 Pierre Purseigle, “Mirroring societies at war: pictorial humour in the British and French popular press during the First World War” in *Journal of European Studies*, 31 (2001) p. 289.

Dans l'Arsenal Albert Thomas, on a relevé les classes 14 et 13. On devait remplacer par des R.A.T. Mais on a envoyé à leur place des *prisonniers allemands, des Chinois, toutes sortes d'étrangers. C'est contraire aux circulaires de l'Armement et contraire aux intérêts de la France, contre aux vues d'avenir de la classe ouvrière.*³³

According to Françoise Navet-Bouron, it wasn't just criticism of foreigners that could be excised. Excessive praise could be a problem. "Les articles faisant l'éloge des troupes indigènes sont soigneusement épluchés, les censeurs devant veiller à ce qu'ils 'n'exaltent pas leur valeur au détriment des autres troupes'".³⁴ Attacks on neutral countries and governments were also restricted, particularly those directed at the US and Greece.³⁵

Despite censorship there is still an abundance of revealing material in the newspapers. The reduction in the number of pages they were allowed to have means that the papers had no option but to focus on the most important issues of the day, so their priorities are made very clear. The presence of censorship, restricting the expression of more radical ideas, makes it clearer what ideas are considered mainstream and acceptable. Letters sent home from the front were subject to even more stringent official scrutiny but again this reveals and highlights what sentiments were considered to be acceptable. The context of these letters also influences their content; they were primarily intended to ease the worries of loved ones at home. In their collection of letters, *14-18, le cri d'une génération*, Rémy Cazals and Frédéric Rousseau cite the case of Eugène Bayle, in which there is a record of both his letters and his journal until his death in April 1915. While his journals contained much that could have shocked or dispirited his audience back home, his letters excised anything

33 *La Vague*, 2 May, 1918 and AN F/12/8023. The italics indicate the censored text. For more detail on what was likely to be censored see Maurice Rajsfus, *La Censure, militaire et policière (1914-1918)*. Paris: le cherche midi editeur (1999). The vast majority of censored material referred to the conduct of the war. The R.A.T or *Réserve de l'armée territoriale* referred to in the text were those who had returned to civilian life after becoming too old for active service.

34 Françoise Navet-Bouron, "Censure et dessin de presse en France pendant la Grande Guerre" in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 197 (March 2000) p. 9

35 Navet-Bouron, "Censure et dessin de presse" p. 10, p. 16 The main themes that cartoons were censored on were neutrals, peace, life at the front, profiteers and shirkers. pp. 15-16

liable to cause concern, his primary motivation for writing home was to reassure.³⁶ Nevertheless they are still an important source, as are the journals kept by certain soldiers. These documents can be analysed both as overt statements of belief, but also for the implicit assumptions of gender and race that underpinned them. They can allow us to examine the thinking of soldiers who often claimed to be ignored by the rest of society. This is particularly significant given that some soldiers contended that the war had allowed them to see beyond the mendacities of civilian life and understand the world as it was. Jean Marot advanced this argument : “La vie civile est un vaste champ clos où luttent des intérêts ... Aussi le mensonge triomphe. Nous sommes détachés de tous les intérêts antérieurs ... Pourquoi mentir?”³⁷

A variety of official documents have been consulted. A large number of Committees and Sub-Committees of Economic Action were created in late 1915 to look after the regions of France and suggest ways in which they could better respond to the challenges posed by the war. These committees were presided over by the prefect of the department in which the committee is sited, and were composed of the political, commercial and agricultural elites of the regions. Each region was denoted by a number.³⁸ The reports made by the committees and their recommendations – or lack thereof, on some issues – are often very revealing of their attitudes. For example, their suggestions for how to solve the problem of an insufficient workforce was regularly to call for more reservists or German prisoners, but very rarely to call for immigrant labour, or greater use of women. There is not a comparable source for the views of the working classes, whose attitudes must be understood through the prism of police reports of trade union meetings and activities. In these reports the police would make claims about the attitudes of the workers, but these may not always offer an entirely accurate representation; the police would clearly bring their own preconceptions to bear as well. Not only this but the very presence (or suspected presence) of police

36 Rémy Cazals and Frédéric Rousseau, *14-18, le cri d'une génération*. Toulouse: Éditions Privat (2001) p. 22. See also Martha Hanna, “A Republic of Letters: The Epistolary Tradition in France during World War I.” in *The American Historical Review* 108-5 (2003) for an argument that letters were often honest and unguarded.

37 Jean Marot, *Ceux qui vivent* (1919). Quoted in Jean Norton Cru, *Témoins*. Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy (1993) p. 451.

38 Regions 1 and 2 were in the occupied North East, the others were centered respectively in 3 Rouen, 4 Le Mans, 5 Orléans, 6 Chalons, 7 Besançon, 8 Bourges, 9 Tours, 10 Rennes, 11 Nantes, 12 Limoges, 13 Clermont-Ferrand, 14 Lyon, 15 Marseille, 16 Montpellier, 17 Toulouse, 18 Bordeaux, 19 Paris, 20

informers may have influenced what was said. At a meeting of the Syndicat du Personnel des Etablissements militaires de Lyon, in front of a crowd of 50 people, including both men and women, the presiding speaker, M. Croisille declared that he found it abnormal to see women making shells while their brothers and husbands were sent to the carnage. He was immediately called to order by various people, including the secretary. He excused himself, claiming that his thoughts had been exceeded by his words. It is difficult to tell whether what caused Croisille to retract his words was fear of police action, or fear of offending his audience. The police noted that Croisille had particularly radical views.³⁹

One of the potential sources on gender perceptions that have not been used to a significant degree in this thesis is the fictional literature of the period. In part this is due to the fact that Mary Louise Roberts has already made an excellent study of this area.⁴⁰ It is also because the literature of the time was very Paris-centred, which it will be argued was a special case in terms of behaviour and perceived behaviour. There is not so large a body of fiction dealing with themes relating to race and nationality, but a number of books appeared at the time on the various peoples that France was encountering on its soil, often for the first time, during the war. Some were scientific, some popular and they provide an excellent source for understanding received ideas about race.

In all of these sources, viewpoints conveyed in direct references to women and foreigners tell only part of the story. Their absence can also be crucially important. One of the key arguments that underpin this thesis is that the resilience of traditional thinking is shown not just in the instances where gender and race are referred to in conventional ways, but in the multiplicity of situations in which those assumptions were not stated because there seemed no need to restate them. Where categories are held as normative, then the existence of a large number of discussions about them – even when they restate the traditional position – suggests the presence of an overt

Troyes, 21 Chaumont.

39 AN F/7/13365 13 June, 1917.

40 Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes, Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1994) See also Susan B. Grayzel, *Woman's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France, 1914-1919*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1999).

challenge towards those categories. The paucity of such references is the clearest sign of the strength of those normative assumptions. Clearly, categories as fundamental to French society as gender and race would never be invisible at a time of great upheaval - and the years of the First World War certainly were, even if they are far from unique in being seen as such by their contemporaries – yet the vast majority of texts produced during the war exhibited little sign of uncertainty over such core concepts.

The first chapter of this thesis examines French popular and scientific views of race as a category and of other races more generally. It describes how each race was seen to have differing innate characteristics and sometimes these varied dramatically. Nonetheless, there were several themes that recurred in discourses dealing with practically all non-white races. Principal amongst these was an element of childlike nature, a reliance on emotion and instinct rather than the rational behaviour of white men. It also focuses on the issue of immigration, which the war made an important issue in public policy. It suggests that the ways in which people of different races were utilised and portrayed in the war was defined by pre-existing discourses, and that responses towards the behaviour of non-whites in France were conditioned through those existing ideas. Received wisdom about other races could be manipulated to serve the case the writer wished to make. The perceived ferocity of Black African troops could be situated in the positive context of terrifying the Germans; for example a caricature depicted a German prisoner fearing being eaten by a black soldier. The soldier responded: “N’aie pas peur. Li sauvage mais Li ne mange que des choses propres”.⁴¹ This ferocity could also be portrayed negatively, as a threat to French women left defenceless by their husbands’ absence. It is argued that this flexibility of usage and the omnipresence of traditional concepts in the discourses of the participation of non-white peoples during the war prevented any significant alteration of attitudes towards them.

The second chapter focuses on the various white foreigners living in France during the period of the war, whether as immigrant workers, refugees, allies or invaders. It

41 Guy Pedroncini, “Allocution introductive” in Claude Carlier, Guy Pedroncini (eds.) *Les Troupes coloniales dans la Grande Guerre* Paris: Institut d’Histoire des Conflits Contemporains (1997) p. 19.

argues that each nation's inhabitants were held to have different collective characteristics and that these differences were ascribed to racial factors within that nation as much as to cultural influences. The ways in which French discourse on nationality differed from its discourse on race is examined, as well as the similarities and connections between the two. Again it argues that, despite the radically different ways in which France interacted with its fellow nations during the war, these interactions were interpreted within the limitations of pre-conflict conceptions of those nations. J. B. Massé, the founding director of "L'Aide-Assureur de France", arguing in favour of life insurance, spoke of how the Germans had introduced it "pour élever le niveau social de sa population et pour mieux préparer celle-ci à dominer le monde entier." Meanwhile he praised how the Americans had introduced the measure for "tous ses soldats et marins combattant aux côtés de nôtres pour la civilisation et le Droit de Nations."⁴² Thus the German decision is seen within the context of its militarism as a preparation for future expansionist wars, while the American one is described as indicative of their commitment to civilisation.

The third chapter discusses the impact of the conflict on ideas about women and their place in society. It considers the extent of the division between the home front and the trenches and how far this division resulted in shifts in gender perceptions. While the division between those who fought at the front and those who did not was real and significant, it will be argued that the primary way in which this division was felt and expressed was not between "masculine" and "feminine" but through a rhetoric where what counted was the degree of suffering that the war had imposed. Clearly the soldiers were the ones who were held to have suffered the most, but widows, the orphaned, and refugees were also privileged in this interpretation. Those widowed by the war often took prominent positions in activities commemorating the war. On the other side of the divide were those held to be profiting from the war. This definition was very broad and could cover a wide range of individuals depending on the situation. These might include those believed to be shirking their duty to fight, those making money out of the war, those using the war to indulge in illicit sexual behaviour, and those who visibly enjoyed themselves, seemingly indifferent to the suffering of others. While women were often placed amongst those who constituted

⁴² J. B. Massé, *Notice des assurances sur la vie et retraites de l'état* (1918) p. 1.

these categories, it was rarely exclusively their province. Furthermore, when women were criticised for taking advantage of the war, or not taking it seriously enough, the criticism followed traditional lines. The similarities with pre- and post-war discourse are clear, and most wartime observations on female behaviour succeeded in placing that behaviour within accepted conceptions of what was normal.

This chapter will also address the issues of commemoration and the birth-rate, two vital areas of post-war debate that have been posited as both the source and site of reactionary activities towards feminism. Commemoration was significant because it was a key way in which the memory of the war was officially formalised. Daniel Sherman argues that French authorities used commemoration as a crucial part of attempts to re-impose traditional ideas after they had been challenged in the upheaval of the war and in particular to emphasise the pre-eminent role of masculine heroism.⁴³ While Sherman is convincing that this influenced the manner in which commemoration occurred, this thesis suggests that it was only one of several such influences and was by no means the dominant one. The issue of natality and depopulation was seen as vitally important in the wake of the colossal casualties inflicted on the French armed forces during the war. A vast number of solutions were offered as to how to increase the birth rate. This variety of opinion meant that no consensus was achieved on how to address the problem and what action was taken was largely ineffective.

The fourth chapter focuses on how women and foreigners were seen in the context of the workplace, and what effect the changes wrought by war in the French economy had on this. This chapter will also examine how the work carried out by women and foreigners during the war influenced broader views of their nature, their abilities and the positions they could or should occupy in French society. It will argue that the utilisation of these groups was firmly rooted in pre-war conceptions of their capabilities and qualities.⁴⁴ For immigrant labour in particular, this meant that they

43 Daniel J. Sherman, "Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity in France after World War One" in *Gender and History* 8-1 (1996) pp. 82-107.

44 Laura Downs has argued that in the metalworking industries of France and Britain there were some radical changes in the jobs undertaken by women but that these changes were described in a conservative manner which masked the potentially revolutionary changes that occurred. Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*.

were rarely trusted in any area of employment except low skilled, low paid work under French supervision. Fears over differing customs ensured that colonial workers were usually kept together, away from the French population as much as possible. French women were granted more opportunities in employment, although traditional forms of employment still predominated. There were also significant changes in French working practices associated with the modernisation and mechanisation of the economy, with a consequent reordering of jobs undertaken by both men and women, that had begun before the war but accelerated during the conflict. This changed conditions did little to alter existing conceptions of women's abilities however. Instead their work was interpreted within the constraints of a pre-war discourse that was flexible enough to allow a broader range of work as "women's work" while maintaining a clear division between that and "men's work" with different attributes and skills being essential for both. Where women were held to have performed well in a job, that work was viewed as being either not being skilled or based on traditional home-making skills. When such an interpretation was untenable then women were held to have been at best an adequate stopgap while men were unavailable. Throughout the war, debates over how to solve the problems over workforce shortages were predicated on the assumption that it was much more desirable to employ French men than foreigners or women.

In general the issues of whether the war actually resulted in a change in the position in society of men and women, French and foreign, lies outside the scope of this study. It simply seeks to assess people's attitudes towards gender and race.

CHAPTER 1 - The Racial Other

The First World War saw an unprecedented number of foreigners on French soil, and from a diverse background. There were German invaders in the North East and prisoners of war in the rest of the country, Belgian refugees, immigrant workers, colonial soldiers and allied armies.

While only the Germans were actively and consistently loathed, all of the others provoked resentment or unease at some level amongst the French public. In some ways, they provided an acceptable outlet for discontent that could not be directed at the French. It was politically difficult to criticise the behaviour of the *poilus*, so instead the population could decry the conduct of the Allied troops. Other foreigners could be portrayed as profiteers at the expense of the French, seducers of their women, collaborators with the enemy, or even spies. A Bill presented in 1915 demanded that at the end of the war an identification card be required for all foreigners residing in France. This became official policy in April 1917.⁴⁵ At the start of the war, the prefect of the Savoie felt impelled to criticise “Une campagne odieuse [qui] est menée par l’Allemagne, dans certains milieux de notre beau département: elle va jusqu’à prétendre ‘que les Suisses sont vendus à L’Allemagne’”.⁴⁶

The return of demobilised troops, to find foreigners in their jobs led to some outbreaks of xenophobia. One of the more prominent reactions was that of unemployed workers in the hotel industry who organised themselves into the Union des combattants de l’industrie hôtelière and participated in street demonstrations. According to Schor, they argued that it was “dangereux d’abandonner le contrôle d’une activité importante à des métèques; ces derniers ne prendraient jamais en compte les intérêts de la France et risquaient de transformer les hôtels en officines d’espionnage.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Noiriél, *The French Melting Pot*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ AN F/7/12939, 8 August, 1914.

⁴⁷ Ralph Schor, *L’Opinion Française et les Étrangers, 1919-1939*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne (1985) p. 80.

Foreigners had not, of course, been regarded favourably before the war.

G. Dallier wrote in 1914

Will we always be able to impose our customs, our civilization, in a word our label, on the invaders? Will assimilation go smoothly? Unmistakeable symptoms seem to indicate that we are reaching a point of saturation. ... Our customs are becoming exotic, our language is becoming overcome by foreign terms, even our security is threatened by dangerous elements who are attracted by our wealth and whom our lenient laws do not frighten.⁴⁸

Jean-Jacques Becker provides two examples of reports on the harvest of 1914. A schoolmaster in the Isère declared,

There were signs of remarkable dedication: young lads aged 15 to 20, young girls taking off their aprons and putting aside the needlework they had begun, resolutely took up their sickles and lent a hand to the women left alone with their young children. "There's a war on!" people said. The job was not badly done, and, moreover, without the help of foreign labour which the prefecture had placed at the disposal of those who asked for it.⁴⁹

The prefect of Lot boasted that "[...] several mayors assured me that the harvest will be brought in and the next prepared without the help of strangers."⁵⁰ In both examples, and particularly in the first, the primary sentiment is pride that the community has managed on its own. However, both also make it clear that foreign labour was unwelcome, and would be avoided wherever possible. This was exacerbated during the war by the greater likelihood that the foreign presence would be from outside Europe. The negative feelings that the French may have felt towards Belgian, Italian or Spanish workers were very different to their suspicions of non-white immigrants.

The racial superiority of the white peoples was taken as practically a given in France at the start of the twentieth century. The *Tour de la France par deux enfants* is perhaps the most well known schoolbook from the Third Republic, read by children

⁴⁸ G. Dallier, quoted in Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot*, p. 189.

⁴⁹ Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People*. New York: St Martins (1986) pp. 15-16.

across France. It featured an illustration that depicted four races of man - white, red, yellow, and black. The white race is described as “la plus parfaite des races humaines.”⁵¹ This assertion took its lead from prominent scientific arguments. In his book *La Sélection humaine* from 1919, the eminent physiologist Charles Richet dismissed the achievements of black people. “L’architecture nègre, ce sont les paillotes, la peintures nègre, ce sont les dessins informes dont ils ont bariolé leurs guitars... Les dimensions du crane et les formes du cerveaux les rapprochent des singes.”⁵²

Richet elaborated on his own scale of the human races:

Nous mettrons résolument tout au bas de l’échelle hiérarchique des races humaines la *race noire*, incapable de penser et d’innover, impuissante à se constituer en nation, puis au-dessus d’eux, et très loin d’eux, la race jaune, peu inventive, peu créatrice, mais brave, laborieuse, apte à une assimilation rapide; et enfin, tout à fait au-dessus des deux-races, la race blanche, qui a tout fait dans le monde actuel, qui a créé une organisation savante, inventé des milliers d’industries, asservi la matière et l’animal à ses volontés; conquérante, par la science, de tout notre planète.⁵³

In the medical debates which sought to set out racial hierarchies, the two primary manners in which racial inferiority was expressed were savagery and infantilism.⁵⁴

These ideas were common currency throughout France, and many writers unquestioningly spoke of inferior races.

The racial scientist Dr Bérillon wrote a book *Les Caractères Nationaux; Leurs facteurs biologiques et psychologiques* that came out in 1920.⁵⁵ It sought to systematise the presumed behavioural differences between people from different nations and of different colour into a scientific theory.

50 Becker, *The Great War* p. 16.

51 Laurent Gervereau, “L’exotisme” in Nicolas Bancel; Pascal Blanchard; Laurent Gervereau (eds.) *Images et Colonies: Iconographie et propagande coloniale sur l’Afrique française de 1880 à 1962* Nanterre: BDIC-ACHAC (1993) p. 40.

52 Anne Carol, *Histoire de l’Eugenisme en France; Les médecins et la procreation XIXe-XXe siècle*. Paris: Seuil (1995) p. 138.

53 Carol, *Histoire de l’Eugenisme en France*, pp. 138-139.

54 Carol, *Histoire de l’Eugenisme en France*, p. 138.

55 Dr. Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux; Leurs facteurs biologiques et psychologiques*. Paris:

Ce qu'on désigne fréquemment sous le nom *d'âme de la race*, c'est la constitution d'un système très stable de sentiments, de besoins, d'aptitudes intellectuelles, d'instincts représentant l'héritage d'un long passé. Ces tendances d'ordinaire dissimulées sous la mince couche du vernis superficiel dont les décorent les régimes politiques et les conventions, se retrouvent chez tous les individus de même race. [...] La race [...] est l'ensemble des individus semblables, appartenant à une même espèce, ayant reçu et transmettant par voie de génération sexuelle, les caractères identiques.⁵⁶

For Bérillon, races were formed through biological inheritance rather than cultural ones. He rejected the idea that nations were a product of a mixture of races, arguing that the war had provided ample evidence that each nation had its own innate racial characteristics.

Une des opinions les plus communément admises c'est que la plupart des nations ne sont que des mélanges de races, les diverses races constituantes s'étant fondues en une race mixte ou métisse. Or, les événements liés à la guerre dont nous sommes les témoins, viennent justement nous apporter la démonstration du contraire. [...] Elles proclament au nom de leurs différences ethniques, de leurs mœurs, de leurs besoins, de la pureté de leur sang, de leurs caractères spécifiques, qu'il leur serait désormais impossible de vivre dans une communauté de gouvernement et d'intérêts avec les races voisines.⁵⁷

The war had displayed then that not only were the characteristics of each individual nation different but that they were also incompatible. Whatever similarities might appear on the surface, Bérillon argued, the key element of the racial personality came from the "milieu intérieur": "Car la personnalité des différentes races n'est pas seulement constituée par des caractères extérieurs, elle résulte surtout de la composition du milieu intérieur." Bérillon assumed his readers would know of this difference between White and Black races but he stressed that it applied equally between the French and German races.⁵⁸

Bérillon argued that it should not be assumed that years of immigrants entering France had undermined the purity of French blood or undermined the natural characteristics of the race. This was because

Amédée Legrand (1920)

56 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, pp. 4-5.

57 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 5.

58 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 7.

la conception de races humaines métissées est en contradiction avec les lois de la biologie. Après quelques générations, toute trace de métissage a disparu et les individus peuvent tous être envisagés comme étant de race pure ou tout au moins en voie de retour vers l'état de pureté.

Again he noted that this breeding out of "métissage" occurred in all instances. "Ces faits ne s'appliquent pas seulement aux croisements des races très différentes de coloration, mais à ceux des races blanches."⁵⁹

By this formulation Bérillon managed to argue both for the purity of French blood and for the ability to assimilate limited numbers of foreigners without sacrificing it.⁶⁰ However, this did not mean that Bérillon was sanguine about the prospects of inter-racial sexual relations, which he considered to be unnatural. "Seule une dénaturation de l'instinct peut expliquer le fait d'une alliance entre deux individus de race différente."⁶¹ Significantly, he believed that while men might be tempted by women from different races, the obstacle to such relationships came from women.

[L]es femmes normales répugnent à toute alliance avec un individu d'une autre race. C'est que la femme semble dotée à un degré plus élevé que l'homme de cette sorte d'intuition révélatrice du danger qu'on pourrait désigner sous le nom de *sens de l'ennemi*.⁶²

Once again, Bérillon argues that different races are inherently antagonistic, and places women as guardians of the purity of the race. When French women did have sexual encounters with foreigners then, they were not only performing an unnatural act, but also undermining their race and their nation. He is also evidently drawing on long-established ideas over sexual behaviour in which men were unable to control their sexual urges and society had to rely on the chastity of women to preserve order. Yet women's restraint is ascribed to an instinctual sense of danger rather than rational thought.

59 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 17.

60 This conception was also present in the debates over immigration, see pp.281-288.

61 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 18.

62 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 19. Emphasis in the original.

It is an over-simplification; however, to assume that the scientific arguments of the period were what determined popular conceptions of race and ideas of French racial superiority. As Neil MacMaster argues, racism is not “a phenomenon derived from an autonomous and somehow ‘objective’ sphere of scientific investigation and theory.”⁶³

Scientists were as much a product of the mores of their societies as anyone else.

The development of racial ideology did not stem from the impact of science and ideas, but rather the reverse: race science was invariably structured as an expression of underlying preoccupations, whether stemming from class position, nationalism, colonialism, economic crisis, or other considerations.⁶⁴

Instead race science has to be seen as just one more way in which the French racial ideologies were expressed, with the scientists in turn reinforcing those ideologies with the “evidence” they produced of eternal racial hierarchies. One example of this is Dr Henri-Etienne Templier’s explanation for the high rate of pneumonia among Black soldiers. He notes that medical and anecdotal evidence confirms the laziness of West Africans, and then suggests that this made them incapable of performing the hard labour required of them. This unaccustomed overwork, along with differences in climate, then resulted in the outbreaks of pneumonia.

D’après les médecins et les officiers coloniaux, les noirs de l’Afrique Occidentale Française sont des êtres généralement paresseux et indolents. [...] Recrutés peut-être un peu hâtivement, rassemblés en convois et souvent obligés de faire de très longues marches pour arriver au lieu d’embarquement, nos nouveaux tirailleurs furent sans doute vite surmenés; nous eûmes dès lors nos premiers cas de pneumonie en Afrique même. [...] Puis vint l’embarquement, la traversée généralement pénible, ne serait-ce que par sa durée, et enfin l’arrivée dans notre pays dont le climat est tout différente de celui de l’Afrique Occidentale.⁶⁵

Racial science was also diverse and flexible enough to be used to support a variety of colonial ideologies. Ostensibly the two major theories of colonial practice, those of assimilation and association, were incompatible. Assimilation presumed that French policy towards her colonial subjects should be based upon the exportation of French customs and attitudes until those subjects could be reborn as French citizens, while

⁶³ MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, p. 7.

⁶⁵ Henri-Etienne Templier, *Observations étiologiques, cliniques, pronostiques et thérapeutiques sur la pneumonie des noirs de l’Afrique occidentale française au camp du Courneau*. Thèse pour la doctorat

association argued that it was better to respect indigenous traditions and seek to develop each colony according to its own individual character. In practice however the vast time that it was believed was required before non-white colonials could successfully assimilate, plus the practical desire for the colonies to contribute to the metropole as soon as possible, meant that the application of the two policies was well nigh indistinguishable. As Alec Hargreaves has argued on the emergence of the doctrine of association at the turn of the century to challenge the theory of assimilation:

Although association rapidly gained widespread support in colonial circles, it should not be imagined that this doctrinal change brought about a shift in colonial practice. On the contrary, it simply provided ideological confirmation of the non-assimilationist nature of existing policies, around which it wove a new set of myths in place of the old.⁶⁶

The pre-war ideas of other races were largely based on hearsay and reports back from those who had travelled abroad. Few non-whites had arrived in mainland France itself, except in a few major or coastal towns. How would the population respond to their first physical encounters with the racial other? This chapter seeks to address the question of how contact with people of different colour affected the racial thinking of ordinary French men and women. However, it also has to be recognised that, particularly outside the major cities, the everyday contact between the French and those of other races usually remained minimal, primarily because the French government made strenuous efforts to keep colonial contingents separate from the metropolitan population. French attitudes thus continued to be strongly influenced by books focusing on the French empire and its subjects. For this reason, this chapter also examines a variety of works that highlighted French racial thinking in respect to her colonies during the era of the war.

If foreign men were present in significant numbers on French soil and could be encountered on a regular basis by the domestic population, the same cannot be said of foreign women. They were unrepresented amongst prisoners of war, and hardly

en médecine, Bordeaux: imprimerie de l'Académie et des facultés (1917) p. 16.

⁶⁶ Alec G. Hargreaves, *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction: A Study of Pierre Loti, Ernest Psichari and Pierre Mille*, London: MacMillan (1981) p. 13.

represented in the armies of France's allies. Very few were recruited to work in the economy. Instead foreign women continued to appear to the French largely through their representation in print. The depiction of foreign women in the newspapers was used in two different, but not necessarily contradictory fashions. Most commonly, they were used as an example of what could befall French women should they lose sight of their true calling. The fact that the sole female US deputy burst into tears while casting her vote on the entry of the US into the war drew from *La Petite Gironde* the response... "Vous voyez bien que la femme est dominée par sa sensibilité et ses nerfs au point de ne pouvoir prendre une résolution..."⁶⁷ Camille Ferri-Pisani condemned American women for measuring men's worth only in monetary terms. All that she sought was marriage, whereupon the man was forced to work all day to buy the woman cars, a fine house, a yacht and so forth. However, what made American women differ from "Latin" women was not racial factors but cultural ones "la *girl* n'éprouve jamais ce besoin d'être protégée et de se sacrifier, besoin qui crée la douceur et le dévouement de nos femmes latines."⁶⁸ In an article entitled "Elles vont parler!" the fact that British women had been granted the right to preach in Anglican churches was commented on, and linked to female suffrage.

Le droit de vote pour les femmes, ce sera le droit à la parole publique. Mais sur quels sujets? Sur les intérêts de l'Etat, la défense du pays, la prospérité financière et industrielle. Sans doute ces questions ne sont pas négligeables. Mais elles n'ont pas pour les dames l'importance des questions morales. Sur ce domaine, la femme est bien chez elle, maintenant. En lui donnant les clés de l'église et le droit au prêche, les évêques anglais réalisent les plus chers de ses désirs: faire la leçon aux autres, gourmander et condamner au nom du Ciel.⁶⁹

Here, the conduct of foreign women is seen as an example of what could happen in France. The behaviour of women in more "exotic" societies by contrast was not seen as having any relevance to the women of France. Instead, their actions were merely used to illustrate the exoticism of their society. Occasionally there were reports on the "amazones" serving in the Russian army.⁷⁰ The exploits of these women were

⁶⁷ *La Petite Gironde*, 15 April, 1917.

⁶⁸ Camille Ferri-Pisani, *L'Intérêt et l'idéal des États-Unis dans la guerre mondiale*, Paris: Perrin (1918), pp. 147-8, p. 154.

⁶⁹ *La Petite Gironde*, 23 August, 1916.

⁷⁰ e.g. *La Petite Gironde*, 6 October, 1919.

recounted admiringly. They were considered heroic and worthwhile, but there was no suggestion that French women should act likewise. Indeed differing social norms that placed women in roles they did not have in French society were considered an indication of backwardness. According to General Puypéroux, the relationship between husband and wife amongst the Kabyles was akin to one between master and slave, albeit a sweet and courteous slavery.⁷¹ Likewise, Dr Templier spoke critically of the division of labour in French West Africa.

Du jour où l'occupation française leur apporta les bienfaits de la civilisation, supprima l'anthropophagie et l'esclavage et mit fin aux querelles de village à village ou de tribu à tribu, prétexte aux expéditions guerrières, les noirs vécurent dans une douce oisiveté, les femmes s'occupant, comme par le passé, des travaux pénibles.⁷²

Not only were criticisms aimed at African societies for this oppression of women, but they could be simultaneously condemned for giving too much influence to women. A report in 1915, by a committee of deputies on the Commission de l'Armée, on the possibility of recruiting an overseas army noted that "...en Afrique, l'opinion féminine joue un rôle plus grand peut-être encore qu'en Europe dans les décisions des populations."⁷³

While the threat that colonial men posed towards French women, either as seducers or as rapists, was a consistent subtext in French racial discourse, the reverse scenario of French men having sexual relations with colonial women was largely restricted to fiction and postcards. Partly this was because the likelihood of such encounters was slight outside the French metropolis and thus inevitably of peripheral interest in political terms. One of the few writers to address the subject in his account of being a soldier in Africa, *Troupes noires, Premières cartouches*, was Alfred Guignard, but he played down its incidence.

71 General Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale dans la Grande Guerre (1914-1919)* Paris (1920) p. 216.

72 Templier, *Observations*, p. 16.

73 Marc Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique: Contributions et réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F. (1914-1919)*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne (1982) p. 75.

Car l'élément masculin de notre race blanche jouit, pour la sexe aimable des autres, d'une appétence singulière et sans réciprocité qui se manifeste dès le débarquement, chez les nouveaux venus, même d'âge certain, par une curiosité immédiate des femmes. Mais celles-ci, y eussent-elles trouvé intérêt, n'ignoraient pas de quelle bonne raclée leurs seigneurs et maîtres présents auraient puni tout écart public de conduite. En sorte que les convoitises restaient platoniques et nos gens sur leur faim.⁷⁴

The absence of a significant number of foreign women in France did not mean that the debates over nationality and race were not significantly gendered. The very absence of foreign women increased the perceived threat to the purity of French womanhood from the incoming men, while the language in which nations and races were described often contained similar themes to those that characterised the gender divisions within French society.

The Essential Nature of Non-Whites.

Laurent Gervereau describes well the ways that material aimed at adults portrayed the non-white world in the years before the war

Mais, après ce trop court inventaire, nous voyons quel est l'axe principal de l'exotisme - de l'exotisme africain - à cette période: correspondant à une tendance générale des romans, des affiches, des imageries, des cartes postales, de la presse illustrée, à une "exotisation" des représentations, violence et érotisme s'implantent. Pourtant, c'est la violence souvent qui prévaut (presse). Elle nous montre une Afrique sauvage, dangereuse, qui valorise ainsi les conquêtes et la nécessité de la mission civilisatrice.⁷⁵

Nearly all illustrators focused on the same three aspects "la violence, l'érotisme, l'étrangeté."⁷⁶ Stora-Lamarre describes erotic literature set in the French colonies, which saw "l'ardent soleil qui provoque des scènes 'pimentées' et 'orgiaques'. *Chaudes saturnales* (1893), *Promenades en Alexandrie* (1907), mettent en scène les raffinements de l'Orient, sa luxure, ses voluptés bizarre et cruelles, sa joie sanguinaire et ses instincts féroces."⁷⁷ Around the turn of the century, newspapers such as the

74 Alfred Guignard, *Troupes noires, Premières cartouches*. Paris: A Fayard (1915) pp. 44-45.

75 Gervereau, "L'exotisme" p.39 See also J. Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, New York: Yale University Press (1995) pp.159-163 for a more positive description of French attitudes, which puts a greater emphasis on eroticism.

76 Gervereau, "L'exotisme" p. 39.

77 Annie Stora-Lamarre, "Plaisirs Interdits: L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale" in Pascal Ory (ed.)

Petit Journal, the *Petit Parisien* and *L'Assiette au Beurre* depicted the cruelty of the foreigner with depictions of Moroccans callously exhibiting the heads of prisoners on stakes or of a criminal being walled up in a cell to die.⁷⁸ The extremely pro-colonial newspaper *Le Petit Marseillais* published several articles in 1914 highlighting peculiar behaviour in other civilisations. One light-hearted article mocked the Chinese for not only arranging marriages before those involved were old enough to marry but before they were even born: “les Chinois, toujours extraordinaires, ont imaginé le mariage avant la naissance des mariés.” Another, entitled “Justice Indigène”, commented on the primitive ways in which justice was done in indigenous communities in West Africa.⁷⁹

Laure Barbizet-Namer argues that when African troops were depicted in the French imagery of the war, black Africans were used in much greater numbers than Arabic North Africans.⁸⁰ Indeed in all the representations of non-whites in France during the war, blacks were the most common. This did not correlate with the absolute numbers of foreigners in France, so it seems more likely that they provided the most obvious signifier of the otherness of colonial men.

The picture of the black race that was painted in the newspapers of the period was a largely sympathetic one. If there was no mistaking the condescension and the natural assumption of superiority of the white authors, they generally depicted blacks as courageous and kind hearted. Censorship must have played some part in this. In December 1914, the War Ministry criticised a censor who had allowed the publication of an article in *La Gazette du Haut-Jura* detailing the “sauvagerie marocaine” of certain colonial troops.⁸¹ While newspapers still represent a useful source, it must be noted that the censor may have restricted some of the more potentially unfavourable opinions towards those foreigners brought into France.

La Censure en France à l'ère démocratique (1848-...). Brussels: Editions Complexe (1997) p. 50.

⁷⁸ Gervereau, “L'exotisme”, pp. 28-31 Pictures from 1897-1906.

⁷⁹ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 5 January, 1914, 6 June, 1914.

⁸⁰ Laure Barbizet-Namer “Ombres et lumières portées sur les Africains: peintures, gravures, illustrations, cartes postales.” in Nicolas Bancel; Pascal Blanchard; Laurent Gervereau (eds.) *Images et Colonies: Iconographie et propagande coloniale sur l'Afrique française de 1880 à 1962*, Nanterre: BDIC-ACHAC (1993) p. 92.

⁸¹ Rajsfus, *La Censure*, p. 37; *La Gazette de la Haut-Jura*, 5 December, 1914.

In the *Petite Gironde*, a story narrated how, in a colonial outpost in Timbuktu, the white officers had been celebrating Christmas. The captain recounted to the *tirailleurs* the story of the Nativity, via an interpreter: “un gigantesque noir qui était décoré de la Légion d’honneur”. It was a largely conventional narrative, but with several interjections such as “Cette naissance eut lieu, il y a très longtemps, dans un village plus lointain que Gao, plus lointain que Zinder” because, presumably, the audience were considered unable to understand such complex concepts as great distance if they were not related to their own geography. The captain also recounted a selection of the miracles performed by Jesus, in addition suggesting “il aurait même retrouvé la petite fille du caporal Koulibali, quit fut enlevée cet été par les Béribaches.” Later on this corporal goes off searching for Jesus in the expectation that he would be able to return his daughter.⁸² This story illustrates several of the recurring themes in portrayal of black colonials. They are often of exceptional physique - the interpreter is gigantic. In many respects they are like children - the life of Jesus is recounted as if it were a school class; the misunderstanding of Corporal Koulibali is childlike. Yet they are also heroic - the interpreter has the Légion d’honneur, and caring - the corporal is deeply concerned for his daughter. Similarly the tale of “Le Tirailleur Kaddour” portrays Kaddour as a model soldier, with the médaille militaire and the Croix de Guerre, who nevertheless is generally a figure of fun because of his inability to speak proper French.⁸³

This preconception is also present in more serious pieces of work. Alphonse Siché in his 1919 book *Les Noirs* argued that “les peuples jeunes ayant précisément ces traits propres à la jeunesse: naïveté, ignorance qui s’étonne, générosité, enthousiasme du cœur, crainte et bravoure conjuguées.”⁸⁴ Léon Gaillet wrote a book about a Senegalese soldier called Coulibaly, implicitly portraying him as a representative Senegalese man, highlighted by the popularity of the name Coulibaly in Western Africa.⁸⁵ Reviewed in *La Petite Gironde*, Gaillet’s analysis was accepted as an accurate one. The reviewer recommended the book “puisqu’il fait bien connaître une

⁸² *La Petite Gironde*, 3 January, 1917.

⁸³ *La Petite Gironde*, 14 February, 1917. The kidnapping also highlights the barbarism of African society.

⁸⁴ Siché, *Les Noirs*, p. 50.

⁸⁵ Coulibaly was actually General Mangin’s personal bodyguard, and thus distinctly unrepresentative.

race qui est venue mêler son sang au notre sur les champs de bataille d'Europe".⁸⁶ This sentence underlines the fundamental point for the French in regard to foreign soldiers, that the act of fighting for France outweighed whatever defects their race or lack of civilisation entailed. The *Petit Marseillais* review of Gaillet's book on "soldats à l'âme primitive" also viewed it favourably, saying it had the "saveur de la vérité".⁸⁷

Gaillet described the evolution of the relationship between him and Coulibaly.

Avant de vivre avec Coulibaly, je ne me sentais guère attiré vers lui que par un sentiment de curiosité. Quand je fus versé aux bataillons sénégalais, je manquais d'enthousiasme. Obligé d'être constamment en contact avec lui, j'éprouvais à son égard de la répugnance... Entre cette humanité à l'état d'enfance et notre civilisation beaucoup trop complexe pour elle, l'écart me semblait trop grand. Peu à peu, sans m'en rendre bien compte moi-même, j'ai commencé à connaître plus exactement Coulibaly et à éprouver pour lui quelque sympathie. Il me semblait aussi sentir la mienne... Parti avec lui sur la Somme, nous avons été exposés aux mêmes dangers... J'ai vu couler son sang, (sic) et je me suis rendu compte qu'il savait mourir pour la France... Ma sympathie s'accroît chaque jour pour lui et me permet de mieux le comprendre.⁸⁸

It is noticeable that Gaillet does not reverse his judgement that Coulibaly is a representative of humanity in a state of infancy, merely that his willingness to fight and possibly die for France demonstrated his positive qualities. The *Petit Marseillais* made a similar point, emphasising that contact with black soldiers merely was to find out the qualities that accompanied their defects. "Ces noirs lui paraissaient niais ou même stupides, maladifs, lents, geignards, ridiculement superstitieux. Mais à vivre avec eux, il revint de ses opinions préconçues; à côté de leurs défauts, il constata leurs qualités".⁸⁹

Gaillet also explicitly described Coulibaly as childlike. "Coulibaly pense, parle, agit comme un enfant."⁹⁰ In addition, "l'intelligence abstraite fait évidemment défaut à ce Sénégalais, qui est incapable d'isoler leurs rapports des choses elles-mêmes, et son

⁸⁶ *La Petite Gironde*, 6 January, 1918.

⁸⁷ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 December, 1917.

⁸⁸ *La Petite Gironde*, 6 January, 1918.

⁸⁹ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 December, 1917.

⁹⁰ *La Petite Gironde*, 6 January, 1918.

intelligence pratique est assez limitée”.⁹¹ This lack of civilisation did not just imply innocence amongst the Senegalese; it could also have a darker side, when they were subject to malign influences. “Coulibaly est impressionnable. Il peut se décourager ou se dépraver facilement.”⁹² The argument that a people who rely on instinct rather than on abstract intelligence can be too easily swayed into error illustrates another way in which views of non-whites could parallel those of women. Because of the limited intelligence and gullibility of the Senegalese, Gaillet concluded with “un hommage aux officiers coloniaux qui ont su gagner les Sénégalais à notre cause.”⁹³ Again, this phrasing places the Senegalese as childlike, their destinies in the hands of the white colonial officers.

Similarly, when a group of colonial troops successfully defended their position under fire, they were praised by the *Petite Gironde* for their indomitable bravery. However, the account reserved most of the credit for the French sub-lieutenant who commanded them: “il manifesta, durant toute l’attaque, un admirable sang-froid et une maîtrise absolue de lui-même, dirigeant les opérations avec un flegme qui donnait confiance aux soldats.”⁹⁴ The distinction between French cold-blooded, rational bravery and the instinctive, impetuous bravery of their colonial troops was a regular staple of the discourse on their relative performance.

The naivety and childlike nature of blacks was repeated time and time again. When the recruitment of black troops was being discussed, “Le caractère généralement gai, voire enfantin, des noirs...” was noted.⁹⁵ General Puypéroux commented on how the colonial troops under his command were never upset by the regular movement that the unit was forced to undertake, because they were “grands enfants” who liked travel and change.⁹⁶ The comte de Briey, describing a mission to Africa, noted the proverb... “Après le roi, rien n’est supérieur à la vache” et disait que bien d’autres formulaires témoignent dans leur naïveté de la même estime des Ruandiens pour les bêtes à

91 *La Petite Gironde*, 6 January, 1918.

92 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 December, 1917.

93 *La Petite Gironde*, 6 January, 1918.

94 *La Petite Gironde*, 9 July, 1918.

95 *La Petite Gironde*, 19 August, 1918.

96 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* p. 45.

cornes.”⁹⁷ William Ponty, the Governor General in Dakar from 1908 to 1914, saw the relationship between colonisers and colonised as that between tutor and ward, but put a less favourable spin on the relationship by characterising the ward as “a sometimes shifty, often crude and even cruel ward.” Nevertheless, Ponty believed that the Africans could be won over by ‘*apprivoisement*’.⁹⁸ Guignard in the foreword to his book claimed that “Le noir n’a point inventé cet instrument simple, la roue, ni, partant, la route qui l’utilise.”⁹⁹ Some of the ideas used in teaching Senegalese soldiers French were based on the assumption that the soldiers would not be able to come to terms with the complexities of proper French, and that it would have to be taught utilising the grammar and syntax of the “dialectes primitifs de notre A.O.F.”¹⁰⁰

A still less positive association saw black people as savage. A journalist in *La Bataille* described “les Africains, grands, forts, qui ont un je ne sais quoi de sauvage, de candide, de bonasse et de terrible.”¹⁰¹ *La Bataille* also reviewed *La race chamitique* by Théodore Vibert. This book attempted a history of the black race and “conclut originalement à la nécessité de la domination de la race de Sem sur celle de Cham, celle-ci ‘vaste agglomération de bestiaux humains’ ne pouvant que gagner en dignité, en moralité et en liberté à être aux ordres de celle-là.”¹⁰² This view was dismissed out of hand by *La Bataille*, but nevertheless must have held some currency amongst white Frenchmen.

It was generally held that the act of fighting for *la mère patrie* absolved black newcomers from the defects of their race. Conversely this meant that when they were not seen as doing their duty in the trenches, that hostility towards them was much more overt.

The Senegalese presence in Pau provoked this response:

⁹⁷ *La Petite Gironde*, 2 April, 1919.

⁹⁸ Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize; the Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* Stanford: Stanford University Press (1997) pp. 109-110.

⁹⁹ Guignard, *Troupes noires*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Michel, *L’Appel à L’Afrique*, pp. 372-373.

¹⁰¹ *La Bataille*, 17 July, 1916.

¹⁰² *La Bataille*, 16 January, 1916.

Quand nos braves soldats béarnais, dont la vaillance et l'endurance ont fait l'admiration de tous, viennent en permission, ils trouvent leur petite maison de paysan occupée par 20 ou 40 nègres, leur femme et leurs filles terrifiées n'osant plus quitter la maison, le vieux père obligé d'abandonner le travail des champs pour surveiller le 'gynécée'. [...] Tous les dimanches et jours de fête, Pau est encombré de Noirs qui mendient des tickets du pain. [...] Je vois constamment de grands diables complètement ivres soliloquant en titubant, ou rentrant en groupes abrutis ou excités par l'alcool. Qu'on leur refuse un jour des tickets de pain, ils pilleront les boulangeries et Dieu sait à quels excès pourront se livrer ces hommes très doux quand ils sont sobres, mais redoutables dès qu'ils sont ivres. Les villes isolées aux environs du camp et de la ville ne sont plus sûres pour femmes et enfants et je redoute les incidents les plus graves.¹⁰³

This account makes many important points. The reference to the French soldiers illustrates the true role of men in wartime, further stigmatising the blacks that are employed at the rear. It employs the traditional stereotyped idea of blacks as gentle men who are fearsome when drunk (when applied to black soldiers, their fearsomeness is demonstrated in combat). Most noticeable of all is the sexual unease that runs throughout the passage. This is all the more striking because there is no description of any actual sexual outrage having occurred; merely the presence of black men is enough to strike fear into the women of Pau.

The twin fears of drunkenness and sexual misconduct by black men in France were taken seriously by the authorities. This was set out explicitly in a (post-war) letter to Madagascans who wished to work in France:

Mais dés maintenant, je vous dis que je serai très content si vous étiez assez sages pour faire des économies avant votre retour dans votre pays: vous êtes bien nourris et vous n'avez pas de dépenses à faire: je vous défends donc de boire trop, surtout des liqueurs; je vous défends aussi de fréquenter des femmes dont la vie est mauvaise. Je serai très fâché contre celui qui serait ivre et fréquenterait les femmes en question: je le renverrai de suite et signalerai sa mauvaise conduite au Gouverneur général.¹⁰⁴

103 Yves Pourcher, *La Vie des Français au Jour le Jour entre 1914-1918*. Paris: Plon (1993), p. 186.

104 Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, p. 31 (the letter is probably from 1924).

In October, 1918, a circular from Louis Loucheur warning against alcoholism in factories warned directors of establishments with colonial workers to be particularly attentive towards drunkenness.¹⁰⁵

In an article clearly designed to reassure its readership, *L'Eclair de Midi* began with the usual formulations about “Nos bons noirs” who have “des âmes d’enfant,” and fight bravely for France. Despite their loyalty towards France, their letters home reveal they are homesick.

Mais à travers les combats [...] ils gardent, indifférents à tout ce qu’ils voient, l’incurable nostalgie de leur beau pays [...] Ils se préoccupent surtout de *leurs* femmes, car ils ont plusieurs, et se demandent ce qu’elles peuvent bien faire pendant cette longue absence du seigneur et maître. Et ils sont jaloux, connaissant la vertu un peu frêle des beautés noires.¹⁰⁶

While this article does highlight the aberrant sexual morality of blacks, with polygamy and loose virtue, it asserts that all the soldiers care about is their women back home, and thus by implication the pure French women are safe from their attention. The focus on the homesickness amongst the soldiers also reassures the paper’s readers that the colonial contingent will have no permanent place in French society. When an alternative approach was taken, the authorities intervened. The *Canard enchaîné* was censored for a news snippet, ‘Chez les Nègres’, which noted that “on enregistre beaucoup de naissances de négrillons” in one French town.¹⁰⁷

The prospect of miscegenation was not the only spectre that alarmed the French. In his medical thesis on the impact of the war on children in Toulouse, Dr Paul Vernédal commented that foreigners were particularly affected by syphilis. He pointed out that the war had brought numerous colonial peoples to the city, Annamites, Kabyles, and Madagascans and “s’ils ont su apprécier le charme de la Tolousaine, beaucoup de Toulousaines aussi n’ont pas dédaigné le physique de ces braves travailleurs.”¹⁰⁸

105 Ministère de la reconstitution industrielle; Direction de la main d’œuvre; Comité du travail féminin, *Protection et utilisation de la main d’œuvre féminine dans les usines de la guerre*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale (1919), p.105

106 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 29 October, 1916.

107 Rajsfus, *La Censure*, p. 73.

108 Paul Vernédal, *L'Erfant de la Guerre a Toulouse*, Thèse pour le doctorate en médecine; Toulouse: Imprimerie Ouvrière (1919) p. 32

At the end of 1915, Justin Godart, the under-secretary of state for military health, warned female healthcare employees that they should avoid dangerous correspondence or giving undue attention to black soldiers. In particular, photos should be avoided, as they would be passed around arousing “la joie et la dérision des indigènes”. In 1916 it was recommended by the *Santé militaire* that the Senegalese be treated in hospitals staffed only by men.¹⁰⁹ Alphonse Ségé talked indulgently of nurses and black patients using “tu”, but later on decided that this intimacy had a negative affect on the colonial population and called for French women to be withdrawn from hospitals where black troops were treated in order to “re-Senegalese” them, before they returned home.¹¹⁰ These debates reveal twin fears amongst the French authorities, not just of the corruption of French women by colonial soldiers but also that such relationships might disturb the racial hierarchies that applied both in France and her empire.

French attitudes towards Black soldiers are also illuminated by their response to the fears of sexual assault aired by the Germans, when French colonial troops were used in the occupation of the Rhineland. According to a booklet entitled *La Campagne contre les troupes noires*, German opposition focused on outrages committed against women by Africans; “puisque les nègres sont logés dans nos villes et violent les jeunes filles allemandes dont les cris emplissent les rues”.¹¹¹ The author of the document, giving a French response, defended the troops as victims of a smear campaign. “D’autre part, les autorités militaires, pour éviter des incidents ont dû prendre de sévères mesures d’ordre aux abords des casernes, où certaines catégories de femmes allemandes venaient provoquer nos soldats indigènes pour lesquels elles paraissent avoir une prédilection marquée.”¹¹² While this is ostensibly a defence of the colonial troops, there is no mistaking the author’s contempt towards the German women for their attraction to these black men. Albert de Pouvourville made a similar argument in the *Dépêche Coloniale* on German criticism of coloured troops.

109 Michel, *L’Appel à L’Afrique*, p. 389.

110 Ségé, *Les Noirs* p. 235, pp. 255-256.

111 Anon. *La Campagne contre les troupes noires*, Mayence: G Maréchal et Cie (1921) p. 2.

112 *La Campagne contre les troupes noires*, p. 2.

Je crois que leurs femmes et leurs filles, chastes ornements des foyers germains, ne partagent ni leur douleur ni leur appréhension. Je me souviens parfaitement comment ces douces âmes échangeaient portraits et serments avec les nègres le plus horrible, mais les mieux bâtis, que les expositions universelles envoyaient en Europe: je me souviens des unions libres et des mariages métis et des enlèvements bicolores, et des fureurs policières, et de l'engouement absolu que les hommes d'Afrique et d'Asie exerçaient, avec toutes conséquences, sur les sentimentales Gretchen.¹¹³

By sneering at the presumed attraction felt by German women towards black men, these authors are maintaining a discourse in which sexual relations between white women and black men is seen as deviant.

An interesting source is *Moussa et Gi-gla, histoire de deux petits noirs* by Sonolet and Pérès, which was published in 1916. Sonolet was a former *chargé de mission* in French West Africa, while Pérès was the director of a school there. Both therefore had personal experience of the French colonial empire. The stated aim of the book was to fulfil Waldeck-Rousseau's dictum "Il faut faire évoluer le Noir dans sa propre mentalité." Throughout, it aimed to educate black children, its target audience, into appreciating the French contribution to their country, and to become more civilised. The plot featured two small boys, one from Sudan, one from Dahomey, who were thrown together. "Ils deviennent amis, montrant ainsi que, malgré la différence de souche, de religion, de traditions, ils sont capables de s'élever à une idée de fraternité dans la grande famille noire." Different origins and traditions were apparently no block to understanding and friendship, thus legitimising French intervention in Africa while at the same time drawing a boundary between the "famille noire" and its white counterpart.

The story begins with the first boy, Moussa, who is engaged as a servant by a Frenchman, M. Richelot. Moussa, who is 13 years old, with intelligent eyes, has a limitless curiosity about the world, which is explained to him by the kindly, knowledgeable, paternal figure of Richelot.¹¹⁴ Moussa's character can be seen to personify the potential for blacks under French colonial rule while Richelot embodies the benign tutelage of France itself. Also in Richelot's crew is Baba who can be seen

¹¹³ *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 5 November, 1914.

¹¹⁴ Louis Sonolet, A. Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla, histoire de deux petits noirs*. Paris: Colin (1916).

as an incarnation of the present state of development in Africa. Baba is “un grand gaillard presque aussi fort qu’un taureau”, always hungry and good humoured, and he tells Moussa that the Niger is so long it goes round the world. Richelot is there to correct him saying that Baba is “un brave garçon, mais c’est un ignorant.”¹¹⁵

First they travel to Timbuktu where Moussa talks to Moktar, an interpreter working for the Administration there. Moussa praises the city, to which Moktar responds that it is only nice since the French arrived. Before then “La ville était alors la proie des féroces Touaregs. Ces pillards, coureurs du désert, étaient nos maîtres.” Moussa asks if all the improvements are due to the French? “Oui, tandis qu’autrefois les Touaregs et, avant eux, les Marocains et tous nos autres maîtres nous pillaient, nous massacraient ou nous réduisaient en captivité.”¹¹⁶ In addition to displaying their superiority as governors, the French had ended the slave trade in the region carried out by “avides et cruels” men, who had been forced to go elsewhere. Later on, when they reach Dahomey, a similar point is made. It is remarked how much better things are now than under the kings of Dahomey, when human sacrifice was common.¹¹⁷ The message is transparent; at least at their present state of development, Africans are not capable of ruling themselves in a civilised manner.

As they continue their travels by boat, the party encounters a hippopotamus. One of the black crew, Phillipe, impetuously tries to shoot it but can only wound it, whereupon he panics and runs. Fortunately, Richelot is on hand to pick up the gun and coolly kill the hippo with a single shot. Richelot explains to Moussa that the reckless bravery of Phillipe is useless unless moderated with *sang-froid*. The implication that black men have the former and white men the latter is one that appears regularly in the accounts and imagery of colonial soldiers fighting in France.¹¹⁸

Nonetheless, the book does praise black soldiers. A captain of a unit of tirailleurs tells Moussa that “De tous ces soldats indigènes, ce sont les Noirs les meilleurs. Ils se

115 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 6.

116 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, pp. 11-12.

117 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 15, p. 30.

118 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 17.

battent aussi bien que les Français.” More exotically, there is a tribe of Amazons, who are described as the bravest in combat in all the country. “Elles s’élançaient comme des folles dans la mêlée et ne pouvaient jamais se résigner à fuir.”¹¹⁹

The message of the book was neatly summed up when Moussa encountered M Gilbert, an old teacher of his, who told him:

Il y a, au contraire, avantage pour un Noir à se trouver au service d’un Blanc, parce-que les Blancs sont plus instruits, plus avancés en civilisation que les Noirs et que, grâce à eux, ceux-ci peuvent faire des progrès plus rapides, apprendre mieux et plus vite, connaître plus de choses et devenir un jour des hommes vraiment utiles. De leur côté, les Noirs rendent service aux Blancs en leur apportant le secours de leurs bras pour l’exécution des travaux de tous genres qu’ils ont entrepris, en cultivant la terre qui permet d’alimenter le commerce, et aussi en combattant pour la France dans les rangs des troupes indigènes. *Ainsi les deux races s’associent et travaillent en commun pour la prospérité et le bonheur de tous.*¹²⁰

Richelot made a similar point, describing science to Moussa, “c’est l’ensemble de tout ce que l’homme a appris depuis que le monde existe, de tout ce qu’il connaît. Elle est l’œuvre des Blancs, mais les Noirs peuvent l’étudier et en profiter comme eux.”¹²¹ The relationship between the two races can be mutually beneficial, but it’s the whites who provide the intelligence and the technology, while blacks can only offer their labour, with the hope of one day becoming “hommes vraiment utiles”.

If black people could not compete with Europeans in the realm of science and thinking, they were regarded as having great athletic power. Guignard described how

Ils nageaient avec une habilité et une rapidité surprenantes, menant grande bruit pour effrayer l’ennemi caché sous les eaux et leurs corps élastiques donnaient par leur aisance l’impression d’une vigueur souple que nos races n’ont plus au même degré.”¹²²

Moussa expressed his admiration on witnessing an Amazon war dance

119 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 88, pp. 27-28.

120 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 83 (emphasis in the original).

121 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 52.

122 Guignard, *Troupes noires*, p. 40.

Avec des bonds de panthère, elles frappent la terre rouge de leurs pieds nus, et elles font tourbillonner leur sabre autour de leur visage qui semble animé par la fureur du combat. [...] Quelle souplesse encore dans leurs mouvements! Quelles étincelles dans leurs yeux!¹²³

Making an analogy between black people and animals was a staple of white descriptions of colonial life. Moussa and Gi-gla encountered a fight between two powerful black men who “se jettent l’un contre l’autre, ainsi que deux bêtes furieuses.”¹²⁴ In a letter home from his camp in Morocco, a French soldier, Auguste Calas wrote of the Senegalese troops that were stationed in his camp that they were “tout noirs comme des taupes”. Later he commented that black children prefer to “rester nus comme des chacals”.¹²⁵

The perceived characteristics of black Africans were not considered to be identical with those of other races. An article entitled “Poste Noire” in *La Petite Gironde* asserted that

le Public est aujourd’hui familier, surtout dans notre région, avec les différents types de l’armée noire. Il distingue le noir des Antilles, silencieux et doux, correctement habillé qui promène sa nostalgie dans les rues, du Marocain bruyant et agressif, prompt à l’aventure, de l’Algérien et du Tunisien en quête de gourmandises. Mais nous ne savons rien de la vie intérieure, de leur état d’âme, car ils en ont une, si primitive et simple soit-elle.¹²⁶

E. L. Laffranque, a sous-intendant militaire, made a report on the manpower crisis in France during the conflict. He dismissed Spanish and Moroccans for being too expensive and offering poor productivity, in inverse relationship to their “ever-increasing pretensions”. The Indochinese were too frail to withstand the French climate. Laffranque believed that the Chinese were the best bet. Laffranque also noted the well-known phenomenon that colonists brought to France quickly lost the best of their qualities unless they were taken in hand by employers with sound knowledge of

123 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 28.

124 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 57.

125 Augustin Calas, *L’album des cartes postales d’un poilu de la guerre de 14 au Maroc occidental*.

Nages: Centre de recherches du patrimoine de Rieumontagné (1998) p. 33, p. 51.

126 *La Petite Gironde*, 13 Octobre, 1916.

their temperament, their customs and, above all, their propensity to succumb to negative influences.¹²⁷

According to the employer testimonies recorded by Georges Mauco, the North-Africans were considered particularly poor agricultural workers, while Algerians and Madagascans were the most mediocre factory workers. The Moroccans and Indochinese fared best of the colonial employees.¹²⁸ Jules Amar, quoted by Laura Frader, describing the working abilities of Kabyles and North African Muslims in 1923 argued that they were superior to Arab workers, due to the rapidity of their movements. “More nervously constituted, they instinctively tend to work rapidly, and it is difficult to moderate the swiftness of their [motions].”¹²⁹ It is notable here that just as the bravery of colonial troops was ascribed to instinct beyond the control of reason, the working abilities of these colonial workers is similarly devalued. Michel notes that blacks were considered more suited to war, while the Indochinese immigrants were judged the most able at factory work.¹³⁰

Indochinese

Jean Hennessy in *L'Œuvre* distinguished between “Les Annamites importés [qui] sont faibles, impropres à de rudes travaux, mais adroits, les Kabyles [qui] sont de nature plus robustes; leur arrivée a été fréquemment approuvée par ceux qui devraient les employer.”¹³¹ In this description it is noticeable how the two races are assigned the working attributes more commonly ascribed to women and men respectively. The attribution of feminine characteristics to Indochinese men was a common one. In 1919, Louis de Launay claimed that “Les Indochinois sont doux, adroits, mais petits, peu robustes et apathiques. On peut tout au plus les assimiler à de la main-d’œuvre féminine.”¹³² Similarly, the Comité Consultatif d’action économique of the Lyon

127 AN F/12/8024, 1 February, 1916.

128 quoted in Jean-Charles Bonnet, *Les Pouvoirs Publics Français et l’Immigration dans l’Entre Deux Guerres*. Lyon: Centre d’histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise (1976), p. 122.

129 Laura Levine Frader. “From Muscles to Nerves: Gender, “Race” and the Body at Work in France 1919-1939” in Eileen Boris and Angélique Janssens (eds.) *Complicating Categories: Gender, Class, Race and Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1999) p. 134.

130 Michel, *L’Appel à L’Afrique*, p. 374.

131 *L’Œuvre*, 10 October, 1916.

132 quoted in Schor, *L’Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 169.

region reported that the region had been short of workers for some time, with the war making the situation critical. They believed that colonial workers could prove useful in filling the gap, as long as they were not expected to do skilled work. However, an exception was made for the Annamites who “paraît-il, s'accoutument très vite à certains travaux techniques”.¹³³ It is noticeable that it is certain specific techniques that the worker becomes “accustomed” to. This is very similar to the idea that women could learn some techniques by repetition, unlike a man, who would learn the craft.

Albert Lebrun, a former Minister of Colonies speaking at a Conference celebrating “L'Effort Colonial de la France” praised subjects from the Far East “excellent aux opérations délicates où l'adresse surtout importe, ayant la douceur nécessaire au maniement des blessés, réussiraient fort bien dans les services sanitaires.”¹³⁴ Lebrun here encompasses the whole of the Far East, not just Indochina into this description, and the Indochinese were often bracketed together with the Chinese, the other major nationality from Asia present in France during the war.

The feminine delicacy of Asian workers was believed to go alongside an inability to handle heavy masculine labour. A winegrower in the Midi complained that his Indo-Chinese workers could only be occupied in tasks habitually confined to women “ne peuvent être occupés qu'à des travaux confiés habituellement à des femmes.”¹³⁵ A similar complaint was made about Chinese dockers by the Chef du Transport Maritime, Dupuy, who argued that

[L]es chinois dont nous disposons peuvent à mon avis être uniquement employés à travaux légers et peu variés. Ils sont en outre pour la plupart d'une résistance physique insuffisante pour être astreints aux travaux plutôt pénibles auxquels nous avons à faire face. Leur place serait mieux dans une usine où le travail est toujours la même et où la surveillance est facile...¹³⁶

Not only does Dupuy disparage their ability to do more than light, repetitive work, he also implies that they are unreliable workers by highlighting the need for surveillance

133 AN F/12/8004, Comité Consultatif d'action économique, 14th region, 15 March, 1916.

134 *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 1 July, 1916.

135 AN F/14/11334 Minutes from meeting of the Conference Interministerielle de la Main d'Œuvre, 17 March, 1917

136 AN F/14/11331 11 April, 1918.

of them. Dupuy's comments also illustrate that factory work was being classified as light work, perhaps due to the recent prevalence of women working in them. L. Chassevent, in his *Appel à la main-d'œuvre étrangère pour l'agriculture française*, written in 1919, claimed that "La main-d'œuvre annamite et indochinoise ne mérite pas d'être préconisée. Cette race est naturellement indolente et le rendement d'un Indochinois ne dépasse pas les deux tiers de celui d'un Français."¹³⁷

The *Petit Marseillais* described the Indochinese as more "frileux" than other colonial workers.¹³⁸ Another similarity appeared in an officers report from 1920 on the subject of Indochinese troops which argued that they "possèdent sous une frêle apparence une résistance à la fatigue insoupçonnée."¹³⁹ This was a description often used in analysis of women's contribution to the war effort. It's possible that the widespread view that Indochinese men had feminine characteristics arose from a wider discourse that saw Indochina itself as feminine.¹⁴⁰ These similarities in the descriptions of European women and Indochinese men did not result in Indochinese women being seen as equally capable as their men folk. An advertising poster for war bond subscriptions that was targeted at the colonial population of Indochina portrayed a woman who "Knowing that her feminine arms are too weak to beat the enemy, [she] is arming other, more virile limbs by participating in the bond."¹⁴¹

As soldiers, the Indochinese were not thought to have the same warlike tendencies as other colonial nations. One officer argued that the Indochinese were more intelligent than other colonial troops and "parfaitement susceptibles de servir dans les compagnies de mitrailleuses et d'utiliser le fusil mitrailleur". They had "un tempérament peu impressionnable [et] leur caractère s'adapte parfaitement à la défensive" but by comparison "leur capacité offensive est moindre". This was in

137 quoted in Schor, *L'Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 168.

138 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 24 April, 1916.

139 Emmanuel Bouhier, "Les troupes coloniales d'Indochine" in Claude Carlier and Guy Pedroncini (eds.) *Les Troupes coloniales dans la Grande Guerre*. Paris: Institut d'Histoire des Conflits Contemporains (1997) p. 80.

140 See Penny Edwards "Womanizing Indochina: Fiction, Nation and Cohabitation in Colonial Cambodia, 1890-1930" in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds) *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia (1998) pp. 108-130.

141 Penny Edwards, "'Propagender': Marianne, Joan of Arc and the Export of French Gender Ideology to Colonial Cambodia (1863-1954)" in Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (eds.) *Promoting the Colonial*

marked contrast to ideas about North and West African troops. This belief was reflected in the very low casualty rate of Indochinese troop loss as a percentage of troops in the field, roughly 2.55.¹⁴²

The deputy and former minister for war Maurice Rondet-Saint put out a third edition of his book *Dans notre Empire Jaune* in 1917. Although the book had originally been written before the war, in his introduction to the 1917 edition he made no indication that the war had resulted in any changes to his view of the people of French Indochina. He merely apologised for “l’apparition en leurs heures solennelles et parfois angoissantes que nous vivons, d’un ouvrage écrit avant la guerre, à une époque où rien ne la faisait prévoir, où tout était à la joie de vivre comme aux espérances de l’avenir.” From this it can be reasonably assumed that he generally maintained the opinions expressed in the book.¹⁴³

The book was much concerned with the characteristics that racial difference bestowed upon the Indochinese, neatly illustrated by his discussion of children of mixed parentage, French fathers and native mothers, apparently a very common occurrence. The question was whether they should be left in the care of the mother and treated as any other child growing up in Indochina or whether the father should educate them into becoming members of French society with the right of citizenship.¹⁴⁴

Those in favour of the first option, he said, argued that

Le métis [...] dans un esprit de généralisation à coup sûr excessif, a les défauts des deux races et aucune de leurs qualités. Incorporé à la société européenne, il est condamné à y faire figure d’éternel déraciné: sinon à sombrer, du moins à végéter. [...] La société annamite, au contraire, est, elle, intégralement organisée pour accueillir les métis, l’assimiler et lui procurer finalement le sort le plus heureux. [...] Or, le métis, élevé par sa mère pendant les premières années de sa vie, reçoit d’elle une profonde et indélébile empreinte indigène, alors que celle du père saurait se faire sentir seulement beaucoup plus tard, et est, par là même, condamnée à demeurer secondaire, sinon nulle.¹⁴⁵

Idea; Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France. Basingstoke: Palgrave (2002) p. 120.

142 Bouhier, “Les troupes coloniales d’Indochine” p. 80.

143 Maurice Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune; notes et croquis*, Paris: Plon (1917).

144 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 15.

Interestingly, although the ease of assimilation is ascribed to Annamite society as a whole, it seems to be more particularly the individual role of the mother that enables the son to grow up as an ordinary member of Annamite society. The profoundly gendered view of the issue of mixed race children is highlighted by the fact that it was only a cause of debate when the child was male, if a daughter was born “la question ne se pose même pas, et la retour à la famille indigène est une nécessité évidente.”¹⁴⁶ The use of the word *retour* is noticeable here, signalling that the choice is clearly not one made by two equal parents, but that the child of a white father immediately becomes his responsibility, and it his choice whether to take care of it himself or to return it to the care of the mother. The possibility that both parents could raise the child is not even debated.

Rondet-Saint then went on to state the case for the children being kept by the father, an argument he claimed “n’est pas non plus sans force”. This argument was simply that “Le devoir du père est [...] d’élever ses enfants métis comme il eût élevé ses enfants blancs. La chose ne se discute même pas.” Ultimately he is not able to choose between the two claims, believing both to be equally defensible.¹⁴⁷ This is in some ways not surprising as the second view does not seek to challenge the assumptions that underpin the first argument (that mixed race children will not flourish in French society) but merely grants that consideration lower importance than the prime requirement that a father should treat all his children equally.

That Rondet-Saint believed that racial characteristics were inherent rather than capable of being learnt was further illustrated by his reaction to a hospital for abandoned children.

J’ai trouvé là, au milieu des bambins chinois et annamites, un pauvre petit Blanc de quatre ans [...] Et comme je demandais si la pauvre gosse souffrait de se trouver ainsi perdu, seul de sa race, dans cet asile exotique: ‘Non, me dit-on, puisque cet enfant n’a jamais connu autre chose...’ Pauvre petit épave! J’eus un serrement de cœur.¹⁴⁸

145 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; pp. 15-16.

146 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 16.

147 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 16-17.

Rondet-Saint is distressed on behalf of the lone white child despite being assured that the boy himself was untroubled by the situation. His language is equally revealing, characterising the child as the odd one out in an exotic asylum.

Understanding the racial characteristics that made up the Annamite personality was a preoccupation for Rondet-Saint, and something that he believed was possible, despite his stated opinion that “L’âme jaune est impénétrable”. He believed that they were generally competent to undertake most jobs that their colonial masters might require them to do, apart from financial tasks: “les seules fonctions auxquelles il convient-il d’affecter l’Annamite avec circonspection sont celles comportant des managements de fonds; la notion du tien et du mien n’étant pas chez lui la qualité dominante, paraît-il.”¹⁴⁹

The general capability of the Indochinese to perform most jobs did not alter the essential otherness of their innate character. He talked to some of the Europeans who worked there, asking them if the Annamites appreciated the benefits of European civilization. A man “fort au courant des choses d’Extrême-Orient” told him “La reconnaissance n’entre pas dans le caractère du Jaune [...] Pas plus que la pitié, sentiment que le Jaune ignore absolument.” After an anecdote illustrating the strange mentality of the yellow race, the author concluded by saying that the pretension of certain ideologues to “assimiler à nos façons de voir et de juger les choses, des hommes dont la cérébralité est si loin de la nôtre? Risible utopie.”¹⁵⁰ Moreover, “Le caractère de l’Annamite, si pusillanime devant le danger dans certains cas, est, à côté de cela et par une contradiction absolument inexplicable, d’une passivité, d’une indifférence extraordinaire devant la mort ou la douleur.” Not only that but, “cette insensibilité, cette méconnaissance de toute pitié, le Jaune l’entend aux animaux.”¹⁵¹

It is noticeable that while the Annamite as described by Rondet-Saint differs in several ways from the traditional image of black colonials, it also offers an explanation for any bravery shown in combat that differentiates it from that shown by French soldiers. While the French are portrayed as being aware of the risks of war,

148 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 52.

149 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 48, p. 37.

150 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 51.

151 Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Jaune*; p. 277, p. 279.

but heroically facing them anyway, blacks are often portrayed as being utterly reckless to the danger of war. The indifference to death of the Annamites as described by Rondet-Saint is similar to the latter as being based more on irrationality than reason, though the alleged pusillanimity of the Indochinese when faced with danger clearly separates them. The Indochinese attitude to death also made an impression on the French population during the war. In November 1915, one Laure L. wrote a letter to the front on the subject.

A Castres nous avons beaucoup d'annamites qui nous font bien rire surtout lorsque un de leurs meurt, ils portent sur la tombe un verre rempli de vin ou liqueur la bouteille pleine, des cigares, des gâteaux et des allumettes puis allument des bougies et ils croient que c'est le mort qui a pris tout ça...¹⁵²

North Africans

The largest numbers of non-white foreigners in France came from North Africa. While they were often regarded as sharing similar characteristics, sometimes distinctions were made between the character of Algerians, Kabyles, Moroccans and Tunisians. For Pradier and Besson:

Chaque race a ses qualités propres et si l'Algérien est un peu plus près de notre civilisation, s'il connaît mieux notre langue, il offre moins de robustesse que le Marocain et est moins sérieux que lui au travail. Le Tunisien est plus faible que les autres travailleurs, mais, par contre, d'un esprit ouvert, et capable de se transformer en ouvrier conducteur d'auto, mécanicien, métallurgiste.¹⁵³

Attitudes towards the significant Algerian population in Marseille were generally hostile. Assessing the situation, a French magistrate condemned the Arabs who had come to France as “presque tout des hommes grossiers, cupides, insolents, n'ayant de notre civilisation qu'une notion des plus vagues.” They were irrevocably cut off from French civilization by “la langue qu'elle parle, ses mœurs et son genre de vie”.¹⁵⁴

152 Gérard Baconnier, André Minet, Louis Soler, *La Plume au Fusil; les poilus au Midi à travers leur correspondance* Toulouse: Privat (1985) p. 333.

153 Pierre Perreau Pradier and Maurice Besson, *L'Afrique du Nord et la Guerre*, Paris: Alcan (1918) p. 116.

154 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, p. 178.

Algerians, stereotypically, were “crasseux et mal habillé”.¹⁵⁵ This low regard was mirrored in Brest which had a large North African population. They were badly received, being seen as competition for the French workers. In addition, the sexual morality of North Africans was considered lacking. “D’autre part ils sont vite entrés en contact avec les prostituées les plus dégradées de la ville et leurs souteneurs.” There were regular instances of brawls on racial lines, usually from the starting point of quarrels over women.¹⁵⁶ This antipathy was reflected in two news stories that appeared in *L’Ouest-Éclair* on 3 February 1918, focusing on unruly behaviour by colonial workers. The first item was entitled “Encore un Sidi” and the second “Toujours les Sidis” and both described brawls developing on racial lines. In both instances the fault was entirely apportioned to the Africans, with the latter also commenting that the Africans were “ivre comme de coutume”.¹⁵⁷ An article in the *Petite Gironde* entitled “Le Galant Marocain” described how a Moroccan had attempted to celebrate the New Year by kissing an unwilling Frenchwoman, resulting in a mêlée. Two Moroccans were arrested.¹⁵⁸ Contact between Algerians and female nursing staff caused considerable concern to the national authorities who, in June 1916, forbade female hospital personnel in infirmaries restricted to Maghrebians.¹⁵⁹ Even this measure was not found to be sufficient to maintain proper behaviour between white women and colonial males. A report on the effects of the war on “Kabylie” in 1919 argued that they were “manque de réserve vis-à-vis des femmes françaises”. Another argued that they had “malheureusement trop souvent laissées aller à des entraînements pernicieux”.¹⁶⁰

James Cooke’s study of Colonel Paul Azan and his advocacy of the development of a North African army also offers evidence of this. Cooke argues that “Azan’s concepts of the North African never really changed between his 1903 essay and the publication of *L’Armée indigène nord-africaine* in 1925”¹⁶¹ Azan advocated that this army should

155 Gilbert Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée; La guerre de 1914-1918 et le premier quart du XXe siècle*. Geneva: Librairie Droz (1981) p. 469.

156 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, p. 180, p. 183.

157 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 3 February, 1918.

158 *La Petite Gironde*, 7 January, 1918.

159 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, pp. 438-439.

160 Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, *Des Algériens à Lyon; De la Grande Guerre au Front Populaire*. Paris: L’Harmattan (1995) p. 54.

161 James J. Cooke, “Paul Azan and L’Armée Indigène Nord-Africaine” in *Military Affairs*, 45-3.

be stationed in North-Africa and the Levant to keep them away from European women of loose morals.¹⁶²

Although French descriptions of North Africans did not tend to focus on their naivety and childlike behaviour to the same extent as descriptions of Sub-Saharan Africans, this theme was not totally absent. André Lichtenberg, speaking at a conference on Morocco, offered anecdotes of the credulity of the native population to amuse his audience, such as the sight of huge crowds of natives watching the cinema in delighted astonishment, even through storms of rain and hail. He claimed that, for the Moroccans, cinema was something miraculous that only Allah could have created.¹⁶³

A pamphlet complaining about the treatment of Catholicism in the French governing of Algeria by Pierre Gael is also illustrative of attitudes towards French colonial subjects in North Africa.¹⁶⁴ While Gael wrote as a Catholic, he argued that the degrading treatment (as he saw it) of Catholicism compared to Islam in Algeria was a matter for all right thinking Frenchmen, regardless of their religious conviction. “Je prie les hommes de bonne foi, croyants ou incroyants, mais ayant le sentiment de l’honneur national,”¹⁶⁵ This was the case because “En abaissant leur culte devant celui des Arabes vous portez atteinte au prestige de la France.” He asserted that the freemasons (whom he held responsible for the law) knew that but would prefer to see France perish before they would relinquish their hatred for Catholicism.¹⁶⁶

Not only did Gael lament the “désir de favoriser le peuple conquis et de le mettre, religieusement parlant, au-dessus du peuple conquérant,” he also extended his critique to architecture. He believed that public buildings consistently favoured Arabic architecture over a French style of building, particularly after Charles Jonnart became Governor of Algeria. “Depuis que M. Jonnart occupe les fonctions de Gouverneur général, on ne construit plus une seule école sans donner extérieurement la forme

(1981) p. 133.

162 Cooke, “Paul Azan and L’Armee Indigene Nord-Africaine” pp. 134-135.

163 Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme, 28 January, 1917.

164 Pierre Gael, *Une Honte*, P. Payan: Oran (1908).

165 Gael, *Une Honte* p. 5.

166 Gael, *Une Honte*, p. 7.

d'une medersa ou d'une zaouïa." His grievances were regularly summed up by the *cri de cœur*: "on ne sait plus si on est dans une colonie française ou en Arabie."¹⁶⁷

Gael feared that these concessions would not warm the Arab population to French rule, but rather display to them the weakness of the French position and incite them to revolt. "Les indigènes, qui sont des êtres simples, mais logiques [...] les Arabes ont la confiance indéracinable de nous jeter à la mer et de reconquérir leur indépendance. C'est pour eux une question de temps."¹⁶⁸

Gael sought to cloak his assumption of French racial superiority in a rhetoric of equality: "En admettant que les Arabes, quoique vaincu, soient autant que nous, ils ne doivent pas être plus que nous."¹⁶⁹ However, his disdain for the "simple" Arabs was clear, and his desire for French interest to retain primacy was displayed most vividly in his concluding sentence. "Mais n'est-il pas monstrueux de voir les croyants français traités dans leur pays comme des étrangers, alors que les Arabes sont favorisés comme s'ils étaient les vrais enfants de la maison!"¹⁷⁰ Here he clearly argues that the French, by right of conquest, have the moral legitimacy to act as they wish.

A. de Vichet made a similar assertion that Islam was favoured over Catholicism in an article on the French government's decision to provide funds for hotels to be built to allow pilgrims to stay at Medina and Mecca. Although de Vichet thought that it was reasonable for "musulmans, qui donnent en ce moment leur sang pour la France, l'accomplissement d'un vœu pieux..." he questioned how this fitted in with the state's declared policy of neutrality towards religion. He claimed that the government often used this to oppose the demands of Catholics, but that it was not the first time the government had given their support to Muslims.¹⁷¹ Examples of this favouritism included the building of a mosque in Nogent-sur-Seine, cooking pork free food for a hospital for North Africans and other Muslims, and releasing a circular detailing what

167 Gael, *Une Honte*, p. 5, p. 9.p. 8.

168 Gael, *Une Honte*, pp. 23-24.

169 Gael, *Une Honte*, p. 26.

170 Gael, *Une Honte*, p. 29.

171 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 6 January, 1916.

rites were to be performed for a dying Muslim. It was claimed that these favours would never be offered towards Catholics. The main target of the article was anti-clericals and the government rather than Muslims though.¹⁷²

Stovall notes that despite the “unprecedented presence of Muslims on French soil, however, religion does not seem to have played a role in the racial violence of World War I.”¹⁷³ This does not mean that Muslims were necessarily seen as in any way equal. In the summer of 1916, J. de Morgan, the foreign expert of the *L’Eclair du Midi* wrote that Arabic Muslims were able to appreciate the enlightened methods of their colonial masters, but left to rule themselves then they would be unable to make commensurate progress.

Aujourd’hui, dans les pays islamiques soumis aux puissances européennes, chrétiens, juifs, musulmans, païens, vivent sur le pied d’égalité, sans froissement pour leurs consciences et pour leur amour-propre. C’est un résultat qui jamais n’eût été obtenu si les musulmans avaient conservé leur autorité politique.¹⁷⁴

This was the case despite the relatively benign judgement he made on the nature of the Arab.

De tous les musulmans, l’Arabe est celui qui possède au plus haut degré le respect de lui-même, l’amour pour les traditions, le sentiment de l’importance et de la valeur d’Islam. C’est un grand seigneur, réfléchi, conscient de sa noblesse et respectueux de celle des autres; c’est la moins barbare de tous les barbares.¹⁷⁵

The development of the war did not affect his opinion, which he restated in similar terms 15 months later.

Certes, les Musulmans qui vivent sous la régime gouvernemental des Anglais, des Français, des Italiens, des Hollandais, comprenant les avantages d’une administration libérale et bienveillante, ont modifié leur manière de voir antan et se montrent loyalistes envers les gouvernements qui leur accordent plus

172 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 6 January, 1916.

173 Stovall, “The Color Line Behind The Lines”, p. 740 n. 14.

174 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 23 Juin, 1916.

175 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 23 Juin, 1916.

même qu'aucun khalife ou sultan ne leur a jamais donné; mais les autres! ceux qui sont demeurés, soit sous la joug de maitres de leur race...¹⁷⁶

The *Lyon Republicain* did not denounce Islam directly, but in a news story on claims that the Austrians were arming Muslims in Albania, it implied a belief in the intrinsic barbarism of Muslims. "Ces éléments auraient été formés en bandes qui ont reçu le mandat de massacrer les populations chrétiennes au premier signe d'insoumission."¹⁷⁷

In Pradier and Besson's book on North Africa and the war they argued in favour of association rather than assimilation on the basis that Islam had made to deep an impression on Africa to ever allow racial differences to be eliminated. They quoted Jonnart approvingly when he warned that the best policy "est celle qui se garde de dédaigner les différences profondes des mœurs et des races, qui a soin de faire état de l'empreinte ineffaçable de la loi coranique sur le sol africain," but to have different races living side by side through their shared interests.¹⁷⁸

La Dépêche claimed that Islam "est plus favorablement accueilli par des cerveaux sauvages ou barbares que le christianisme." The newspaper then went on to make the customary link between savagery, barbarism and bravery by asserting that "la plupart des hommes convertis à l'islamisme sont braves." Prominent examples of this included the Algerians and Moroccans as well as the black Muslim troops in France's colonial army.¹⁷⁹ So pervasive was the link between being brave and being primitive amongst non-whites that any commendations on the bravery of colonial troops act as a reminder of their barbarism.

One useful source for a French reaction to North Africans is the series of postcards sent back from Morocco by Auguste Calas, who was stationed there for the duration of the war. For the first few months they are largely illustrations of the picturesque nature of Moroccan society, without much evidence at all of a French presence there. There is no implication of the population being barbarous, merely showing some

176 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 25 September, 1917.

177 *Lyon Republicain*, 15 January, 1917.

178 Pradier and Besson, *L'Afrique du Nord et la Guerre*, p. 13.

179 *La Dépêche*, 14 January, 1917.

backwardness.¹⁸⁰ There was only one instance of the erotic, a young Moroccan woman with her breasts exposed, simply titled “Jeune Marocaine” with the implication presumably that this is a normal outfit.¹⁸¹ As Calas was sending the postcards back to his wife, there may be a simple explanation as to why there were not more examples of the erotic portrayal of the colonial world. Calas seemed primarily concerned with the exoticism of Moroccan society. A depiction of some musicians was accompanied by the comment “C’est la gaité des Marocaines”. Another depicted Moroccan Spahis. Calas described them thus. “Ils sont de forts cavaliers. Il y a plaisir à les voir galoper à travers le bled sauvage, ils sont forts pour faire la fantasia...”¹⁸²

As the duration of Calas’ posting increased, more hostility emerged in his comments. “La semaine dernière on a fusillé un marocain qui avait assassiné des marocains soumis. On ne rigole pas avec eux. On rend la justice séance tenante.”¹⁸³ As we saw earlier French discourse condemned barbaric Moroccan methods of punishment, but it clearly allowed for the French themselves to dispense summary justice because it was the only way to deal with the native population.

Accompanying a card showing a Moroccan family with a large number of children, several mothers and the father of the family, Calas reflected critically upon them to his young son “Donc tu peux voir Olivier qu’il vaut mieux être à Prémian qu’ici dans ce pays de sauvages.” An encounter with the Zaïns, who had not been pacified by the French, provoked more criticism. “[N]ous sommes chez les Zaïns qui sont plus sauvages que les autres car ils sont dans les montagnes. Ils ne travaillent pas de tout, aussi leurs habitudes sont d’aller piller ceux de la plaine qui travaillent.” By contrast, those who had been subject to French influence in the towns were much better off: “On voit tout le tour des soubassements des murs garnis de briques vernies de toutes les couleurs. Leurs tables basses sont bien sculptées, les verres sont d’un pur cristal très beau.”¹⁸⁴

180 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales*.

181 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales* p. 26.

182 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales* pp. 30-31.

183 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales* p. 33.

184 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales* p. 35.

Ultimately however, the base nature of the Arab population was the conclusion that Calas came away with. “[I]ls sont sauvages dans leur mœurs. Il faut le voir pour le croire.”¹⁸⁵

These views clearly made an impact on his son, and he learnt from a letter from his wife that “le petit Olivier n’aimait pas voir les visages des Marocains sauvages”. Calas responded that this card was different because “sur cette carte, ils ne sont pas les mêmes, on peut voir sur les poitrines les médailles qu’ils ont su gagner au service de la France.” In another instance he sent a card where “tu peux voir ce beau cavalier marocain qui s’est bien battu contre les Boches”.¹⁸⁶ Once again, service to France cloaked foreign inferiority, it did not remove it.

The letters written home by Algerians resident in France tend to suggest that the response they received was dependent on factors beyond simply their race. Gilbert Meynier argues that “la plus grande partie des lettres en arabe provenant du Nord de la France sont très critiques sur les Français, les sentiments exprimés par celles écrites dans le Midi sont plus favorables ou nuancés”.¹⁸⁷ In her study of Algerians in Lyon Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud claims that postal censorship suggested that letters written home in French “tendent à présenter la France comme le pays de cocagne.” In contrast, those written in Arabic commented on “la vie dure, le mépris des Français, trahissent la nostalgie du pays et vont jusqu’à suggérer à leur compatriotes l’évasion en cas de réquisition”.¹⁸⁸ This confirms the regional differences in French attitudes, where the North was more hostile towards immigrants of different races than the South. It also suggests that, unsurprisingly, those Algerians who were fluent in French were happier in French society.

185 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales* p. 26.

186 Calas, *L’album des cartes postales* p. 52, p. 66.

187 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, p. 473.

188 Massard-Guilbaud, *Des Algériens à Lyon*, p. 49.

The Ottoman Empire

The Turks, as both non-whites and enemies, were always likely to be portrayed unfavourably in France. Allegations about the sale of children by the Turks led the *Dépêche* to comment that “Les Turcs, on le voit, sont dignes des Boches. Leur âme bestiale, leurs instincts dépravés, tout concourt à faire des une et des autres des frères dans la crime et des alliés dans la destruction.”¹⁸⁹

In *L'Eclair du Midi*, J de Morgan highlighted the shared mentality that linked France's enemies.

Allemands, Hongrois, Bulgares et Turcs, malgré les différences de race, de langage, et de religion qui les séparent, possèdent tous les même mentalité, méprisant le droit d'autrui, basant ce qu'ils nomment la justice sur la force seule. [...] Le Turc est un nomade, un cruel, un égoïste. Toujours il a été sanguinaire, même avant de se convertir à l'Islam. Le pillage et le meurtre sont dans l'essence même de sa race.¹⁹⁰

For de Morgan, the inherent nature of the Turks was clearly unchanging and brutal. By pairing nomadism with cruelty and egotism he reinforced the popular link between savagery and lack of civilisation, as well as Islam. Revealingly, de Morgan was able to brush aside any trappings of civilisation that lengthy contact with Europe might have presented to the Turks as an elaborate façade.

Depuis bientôt deux siècles, les dirigeants ottomans se sont adoucis, civilisés, en apparence. Ils ont adopté superficiellement des usages européens, ont sacrifié les préceptes mêmes de leur religion, mangeant du porc, buvant du vin et de l'eau de vie, plaisantant des vieux usages, mais jamais n'attaquant leur religion, comme font les libre-penseurs de chez nous. C'est que, dans l'âme de ce peuple, la mahométisme est aussi vivace qu'aux premier jours, c'est que le Turc fait de ses croyances un instrument. [...] J'ai connu dans ma vie beaucoup de Turcs, gens le plus souvent charmants, distingués et très fins, d'une habilité extrême dans la dissimulation; mais malgré le soin qu'ils mettaient à cacher le fond de leur pensée, il était cependant aisé de voir qu'ils étaient toujours demeurés les bandits d'Alp-Asian, et que le contact des Européens n'avait eu sur eux aucun effet profond.¹⁹¹

189 *La Dépêche*, 28 October, 1915.

190 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 27 May, 1917.

191 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 27 May, 1917.

That two centuries of seemingly civilised behaviour with benign European influence was not enough to raise the Turks up from being savage bandits at heart, demonstrates the extent to which perceived racial characteristics were difficult to shift. If every European custom adopted by a non-European power could be seen as simply “superficial”, while civilised behaviour was merely evidence of dissimulation, then their backwardness was almost inescapable. In *L'Ouest-Éclair*, Eugène Le Breton acknowledged the historical achievements of the Ottomans by admitting that the Turks are “la seule race noble de l'Orient” but that did not prevent him from arguing that “Ils ne se sont pas adaptés à notre civilisation. Ils n'ont rien fait pour le développement de l'esprit humain.”¹⁹²

Even amongst the enemies of civilisation, the natural rule of white racial pre-eminence over non-whites was held to be true. The Germans were portrayed as the dominant partner, with the Turks subservient. When Turkish atrocities were committed; the French press was quick to note that this must have been with the support of the Germans. A supposed Turkish massacre of Christians in Syria was claimed by the *Petit Marseillais* to be with the “consentment tacite et la complicité de l'Allemagne et de l'Autriche.” A few months later it argued “la barbarie turque obéissent à la barbarie allemande.”¹⁹³ *L'Ouest-Éclair* described the Turkish emperor as nothing more than the humble vassal of his German counterpart while for the *Paris-Centre*, Enver Pacha was a “disciple effroyablement pittoresque de la kultur germanique, mêlée à la barbarie orientale.”¹⁹⁴ *La Dépêche Coloniale*'s analysis of the Turkish mentality gives an indication as to why the Turkish people could be easily led by the malign influence of the Germans, arguing that “le peuple turc est patient jusqu'à indolence, dénué de tout esprit critique, fataliste et volontiers fanatique”.¹⁹⁵ For centuries, the Ottoman Empire had closely interacted with Europe, but the last two quotations in particular sought to place it firmly into the non-European, uncivilized world. The *Paris-Centre*'s description of Pacha as picturesque emphasised the Turks exoticism, while the *Dépêche Coloniale*'s description could

192 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 24 April, 1917.

193 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 2 July, 1916, 15 September, 1915.

194 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 3 May, 1917. *Paris-Centre*, 9 February, 1916.

195 *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 21 September, 1915.

have been levelled at any non-white people of the time, so characteristic was it of French views of other races as lazy and irrational.

The *Petit Marseillais* took this argument to its obvious conclusion in an article heralding the end of the Ottoman Empire and recommending that the Turks become the latest people to be brought towards civilisation by a Christian power.

Au surplus, les Turcs de race, qui demeurent quelques millions, mais non la majorité dans l'Empire du Croissant, seront les premiers à se réjouir de la destruction de leur propre existence politique [...] Ce sont des pacifiques, pour la plupart, des indolents qu'une doctrine néfaste a frappés de déchéance. Ils constituent une sorte de peuple-mineur, que les chrétiens n'auront pas de mal à conduire, pourvu qu'ils s'appliquent à respecter ses croyances.¹⁹⁶

Colonial Soldiers

Some constants in attitudes to all the ethnic and racial groups were apparent, and are well illustrated in an article in the *Petite Gironde* on regiments made up of a range of nationalities including many colonial troops, but also volunteers from Poland, Holland and Switzerland amongst others. These foreign soldiers were of course heroic and fearless; "Ils vivent l'heure présente, ils blaguent la mort, les obus, la mitraille, et ils en ont le droit [...] La mort c'est rien pour eux, la gloire est tout" but also exotic: "Le même de tirailleurs est aujourd'hui campé dans un décor de verdure, et nous donne le spectacle des danses arabes de mœurs marocaines et d'un mariage kabyle." Most crucially of all, they were childlike. "Le général et les officiers sont pour les hommes non des chefs, mais des parents à qui l'on obéit aveuglément, et c'est véritablement pour tous la grande famille"¹⁹⁷

The same descriptions occurred time and time again in descriptions of colonial troops throughout the war. On the 6th of September 1914 the *Petit Marseillais* quoted Colonel Baratier offering an instructive story about an African soldier. Volunteers

¹⁹⁶ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 12 March, 1916.

¹⁹⁷ *La Petite Gironde*, 12 July, 1917. The description of the fearlessness and desire for glory is similar to that of the descriptions of French soldiers at the beginning of the war, but would have been a very unusual account by the summer of 1917.

had been demanded for a reconnaissance trip and naturally several bravely came forward. The soldier chosen to undertake the task was Baba Touré. He had just declared that it was safe to advance, when he spotted an ambush. Faced with this, Touré chose to sacrifice himself to save his comrades. “Tout à l’heure, les ennemis s’empareront de lui, le mutileront: qu’importe! Son officier est averti.” Despite this warning, Touré’s lieutenant ordered an advance. Seeing this Touré summoned up his last energy to cry “Avancez pas, y en a sauvages!”¹⁹⁸ In 1915 the same newspaper printed a story in an article entitled “Nos Braves Sénégalais” which they argued “révèle tout entière l’âme à la fois naïve et fière de nos braves tirailleurs sénégalais.”¹⁹⁹ In 1917 an article on a Moroccan division returned to the same themes, that death was nothing to them; glory was everything; that their officers were like their parents and were blindly obeyed while their letters illustrated their naivety.²⁰⁰ There is a remarkable consistency of language and theme throughout the years of the war.

The inferiority of the inhabitants of the French colonies was not denied by those who advocated their participation in the French Army. Instead they argued that these limitations did not impair their martial value. Indeed, as has already been argued, being primitive and unsophisticated was seen as practically a guarantee of bravery. In 1911, Captain Marceau described troops from various tribes in Africa. The Toucouleur was “un guerrier d’essence”, “un soldat de vocation qui ne se plie malheureusement pas toujours de bonne grâce à notre discipline militaire.” The Bambara, who “n’éclaire malheureusement pas une très vive intelligence, limitée à la compréhension d’idées simples et concrètes”, were nevertheless highly regarded as warriors.²⁰¹

Gustave Mercier wrote in the *Revue de Paris* about the Algerian who “est un soldat dans l’âme. Il a pu s’ignorer, paisible ouvrir, terrassier ou khammès (métayer): la

198 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 6 September, 1914, The description of France’s enemies as “savages” by France’s colonial soldiers is an issue we shall return to later.

199 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 5 September, 1915.

200 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 12 July, 1917.

201 Hans-Jürgen Lüssenbrink. “Les troupes coloniales dans la guerre: présences, imaginaires et représentations.” in Nicolas Bancel; Pascal Blanchard; Laurent Gerverau (eds.) *Images et Colonies: Iconographie et propagande coloniale sur l’Afrique française de 1880 à 1962*, Nanterre: BDIC-

guerre, en éclatant, a réveillé chez lui des instincts ataviques, des forces endormies.”²⁰² The *Petit Marseillais* also believed that the atavism of African troops was the basis for their good performance, arguing in an article on Madagascans that recruited amongst the most robust sections of their population they are “par atavisme sans doute, des marcheurs infatigables”.²⁰³

According to Stovall, “The widespread antagonism towards colonial workers contrasts sharply with the reception accorded colonial soldiers. Roughly 600,000 soldiers from the empire fought in France during the war. Like colonial workers, they were generally segregated from French civilians and sent home as soon after the war as possible. Yet the reaction of civilians to them was much more positive.”²⁰⁴

Certainly, the portrayal of colonial soldiers in the press tended to be positive. An article entitled “Pour les Troupes coloniales”, following the announcement of a day honouring the contribution of the colonial armies, noted the bravery shown by the troops. It also mentioned the work done on the home front positively.²⁰⁵ Images of the French army sometimes included colonial troops in a position of equality. Initially regarded very sceptically, by the end of the war troops from the Maghreb were highly praised.²⁰⁶ However these positive descriptions often were very similar to those from before the war. General Archinard, who had commanded colonial troops before the conflict and was a patron of General Mangin, claimed that “Les tirailleurs d’aujourd’hui sont bien les mêmes que ceux que j’ai connus autrefois: terrible dans la bataille, mais disciplinés et bien dans la main de leurs chefs.”²⁰⁷ In Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé’s 1899 novel *Les Morts qui parlent*, One of the principal characters, Pierre, a colonial officer argued that the empire could provide a hundred, two hundred thousand incomparable soldiers, Senegalese and Sudanese; fighters with bayonets

ACHAC (1993) p. 75.

202 Lügenbrink. “Les troupes coloniales dans la guerre” p. 75.

203 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 September, 1915.

204 Stovall, “The Color Line Behind The Lines”, p. 766.

205 *La Petite Gironde*, 10 June, 1917.

206 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, pp. 431-433 See also Marie-Monique Huss, *Histoires de la Famille, 1914-1918: Cartes postales et culture de guerre*, Paris, Noesis/Péronne, Historial de la Grande Guerre, (2000) p. 147, p. 149.

207 *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 25 September, 1917.

who cannot be reasoned with, who don't retreat, offer no pardon; the sort of forces who are both malleable and cruel.²⁰⁸

According to *Le Petit Marseillais* in January 1914, the West African troops who were fighting valiantly in Morocco alongside white troops were “le plus précieux et le plus dévoué auxiliaire.”²⁰⁹ Similarly the *Lyon Republicain* described in June 1917 “troupes d’Afrique et des colonies qui, depuis le début de la guerre combattant avec autant de dévouement que d’intrépidité pour le défense de notre sol.”²¹⁰ The crucial similarity is in the stress on the “devotion” of the African troops, as a servant to a master.

Audoin-Rouzeau’s study of children’s wartime literature contends that “Ce mythe égalisateur, présent dans les publications les plus conservatrices, toucha même les préjugés raciaux”. He offers the example of *La Semaine du Suzette*, which described a girl who met a convalescent black soldier in Montsouris Park. They became friends, through exchanging presents, until ultimately her parents invited him to visit their house. “Le soldat africain est invité à dîner, la maison bourgeoise devient pour lui “une maison amie”: la dernière image le montre confortablement installé dans les fauteuils familiaux, largement ravitaillé en tabac ...”.²¹¹ In *Bécassine*, the heroine, a nurse, has to treat a black soldier in her ambulance. She is somewhat nervous, but he turns out to be of princely origin, with perfect manners. Even more importantly, he is a hero, with the Croix de Guerre.²¹²

The phenomenon was not restricted to children’s literature. Séché told of how

Pas d’hôpital de petite ville qui n’ait eu son Sénégalais. L’arrivée d’un tirailleur faisait sensation; on en parlait dans toutes les salles et dans chaque maison. Après avoir été un objet de curiosité, il ne tardait pas à devenir l’enfant gâté. Il amusait par son langage, sa mimique, ses boutades.²¹³

208 Quoted in *Le Nationalisme Français, 1871-1914*, Textes choisis et présenté par Raoul Girardet. Paris: Armand Colin (1966) pp. 122-123.

209 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 3 January, 1914.

210 *Lyon Republicain*, 1 June, 1917.

211 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *La guerre des enfants 1914-1918*, Paris, Armand Colin, (1993) p. 76.

212 Audoin-Rouzeau, *La guerre des enfants*, p. 76.

213 Séché, *Les Noirs*, p. 235.

Of course in all these examples, the black soldiers have earned the right to French approval by serving in action; that they are wounded both proves their commitment and renders them less threatening.²¹⁴ Even then, the stereotyped attitude that the French had towards colonial men was not completely erased. As Anne Donadey has argued popular images of the Senegalese *tirailleurs* in France took two distinct forms “showcasing either their savage nature and warrior qualities against the German enemy, or their benevolent child-like nature in order to reassure the French people.”²¹⁵

Marie-Monique Huss’s book on postcards sent during the war contains four postcards based on playing cards, which offer a fascinating, and very subtly differentiated portrait of the degree of acceptance extended towards non-white soldiers.²¹⁶ The three white soldiers and one black one are each shown receiving the animated interest of the French females, with the *poilu* figure making the most obvious progress. But for the black soldier, although the white woman is obviously enjoying his company, there are distinct differences from the other images. Firstly, she has her body turned slightly away from him, while all the other women are turned towards the soldiers. More importantly, the black soldier is the only one who is not receiving any form of physical contact from the women. The message is that French women appreciate the heroism and gallantry of the colonial soldier, but it is not sufficient to arouse the ardour that the French soldiers inspire in them. Laure Barbizet-Namer has highlighted another way in which the threat of non-white men to French women could be negated in images of the war. She argues that there were numerous popular images of “Infirmières, marraines de guerre, élégantes parisiennes,” recognising the appeal of colonial soldiers. “Mais par un hasard malheureux il a toujours le bras bandé, donc immobilisé, du côté de la tentation, rendue de ce fait caduque”.²¹⁷

214 This position of regarding some black men were superior to others simply on the basis of their service in the French army was also projected on to the black soldiers themselves. “S’il (the Senegalese) reconnaît la supériorité des blancs, il n’hésite point à s’assigner la première place parmi les noirs, parmi ceux restés dans la brousse et qui ne portent pas l’uniforme.” Séché, *Les Noirs*, p. 49.

215 Anne Donadey, “‘Y’a bon Banania’: ethics and cultural criticism in the colonial context” in *French Cultural Studies* 11 (2000) p. 14.

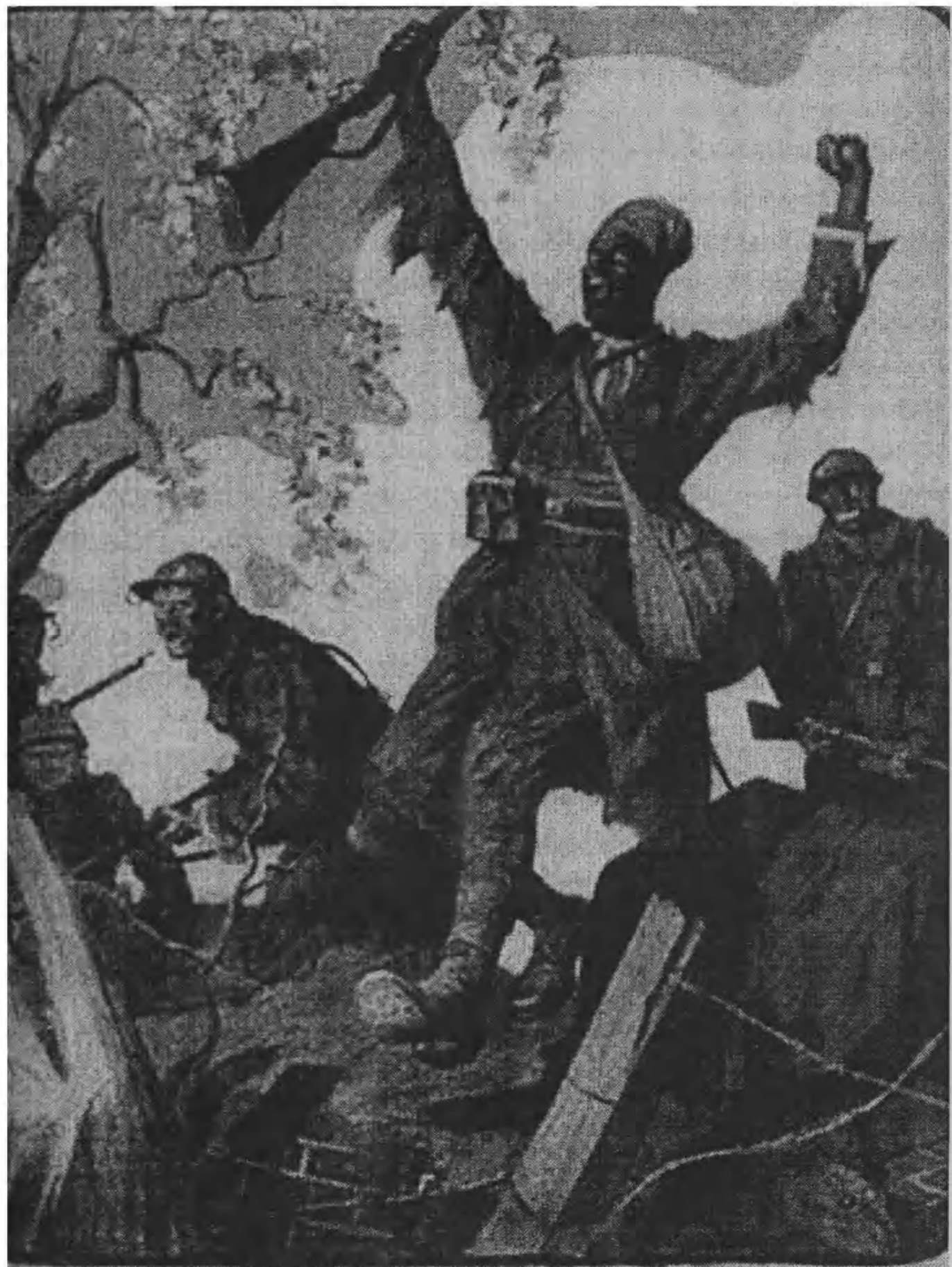
216 Huss, *Histoires de la Famille*, p. 229.

A much less subtle portrayal occurs in the postcard highlighting the *Journée de l'Armée d'Afrique et des Troupes Coloniales*. The four French soldiers are in the background, two sheltering behind a tree, one standing still, another advancing purposefully. The postcard is dominated by the single African soldier running forward fearlessly, arms and rifle aloft.²¹⁸ This postcard is clearly glorifying the heroic black warrior, but it also places him in an exotic context separate from the Frenchmen behind him. As the bravery and heroism of the French soldiery could not be questioned in a medium such as a postcard, the aggressiveness of the black soldier once again emphasises black soldiers' recklessness compared to the sang-froid, the measured courage of the white soldier. The presence of the poilus also no doubt served as a reminder for potential contributors that the Africans and the French were fighting together, and a donation towards the *Armée d'Afrique* was also one for the benefit of the French soldiery.

217 Laure Barbizet-Namer, "Ombres et lumières portées sur les Africains: peintures, gravures, illustrations, cartes postales." in Nicolas Bancel; Pascal Blanchard; Laurent Gerverau (eds.) *Images et Colonies: Iconographie et propagande coloniale sur l'Afrique française de 1880 à 1962* (1993) p. 95.

218 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *La Grande Guerre, 1914-1918*, Paris: Gallimard (1998) p. 69.





**JOURNÉE DE L'ARMÉE D'AFRIQUE
DES TROUPES COLONIALES**

That the heroism of the colonial troops was of a different nature from that of the French troops is made clear in another postcard from early in the war which depicted a grinning black soldier standing with his weapon behind his back, withstanding a hail of shells, while two *poilus* covered behind him. The postcard was headed "Moi...pas peur! Balles pas trouer peau noire". Underneath was a poem by André Rosa, dated 1915 entitled *La Bravoure du Soldat Noir*:

Le noir est un soldat d'un courage exemplaire...
Regardez ce Turco comme il craint peu la mort?
Aussi, la France l'aime, et lui, qui veut lui plaire,
Se conduit en héros, constamment, sans effort.²¹⁹

In both these instances the personal agency of the black soldier in choosing to be heroic is denied. In the postcard the perceived mystical powers of his black skin protect the soldier; the poem declares that heroism comes to blacks without effort. The contrast to the heroism of the French who are aware of the risks of war but take them anyway is transparent. This argument was advanced explicitly by Séché.

Dans toute les actes des noirs, on retrouve ce mélange d'enfantillage et d'héroïsme, si bien que l'on est tenté de croire que leur courage est un effet de leur simplicité d'esprit. Nullement. Le Sénégalais est brave par nature; être primitif, il n'analyse pas.²²⁰

General Archinard was unsure whether the heroism of North African troops was inherent to their race or whether it was down to an endemic fatalism. "La bravoure de nos tirailleurs de l'Afrique du Nord est-elle une qualité purement de race ou est-elle due, en grande partie tout au moins, au fatalisme sous lequel ils sont tous courbés."²²¹

The bravery of colonial troops from both North and West Africa was typically associated with fearless attacking, rather than valiant defence. The *Dépêche* interviewed a captain who had just returned from Morocco and asked him how

219 Lützenbrink. "Les troupes coloniales dans la guerre" p. 82.

220 Séché, *Les Noirs*, p. 39.

221 *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 21 September, 1917.

offensive than defensive warfare.²²³ Barbusse described black African troops as characterised by “their ferocity in attack, their devouring passion to be in with the bayonet, and their predilection for ‘no quarter’”²²⁴

Similar accounts of the savage fury of colonial troops in the attack appeared in newspapers throughout the war. One referring to the “le mordant endiablé des Marocains” argued that

Incomparables au jeu de la baïonnette, les phalanges d’Afrique couchèrent dans ce qui restait de tranchées quelques centaines de soldats aux yeux fous et qui recevaient la mort comme la délivrance d’un lourd et affreux cauchemar.²²⁵

Another description emphasises the unreal, even inhuman, nature of some of the attackers by using words such as “diables” and “fantasia”.

En dépit des obus, deux grands diables de moricauds appelés Hassen et Brahim, en avant de la “vague” jetant leurs fusils en l’air, les rattrapant à la volée, faisant de leurs baïonnettes des moulinets étourdissants, pris de la fureur de la poudre, dans cette boue sans nom dansaient, faisaient la fantasia.²²⁶

An Algerian Jew fighting in the French army claimed similarly “Nous ne sommes pas des démons comme ces Arabes, qui se ruent contre l’ennemi avec une sorte de folie mystique.”²²⁷

222 *La Dépêche*, 26 October, 1915.

223 Maurice Maugars, *Avec La Marocaine*, Paris: Albin Michel (1920) p. 77

224 Leonard Smith, “Masculinity, Memory, and the French World War I Novel: Henri Barbusse and Roland Dorgelès” in F. Coetzee and M. Shevin-Coetzee (eds.), *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, Oxford: Berghahn (1995) p. 254.

225 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 20 October, 1915.

226 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 17 January, 1917.

227 Pradier, Besson, *L’Afrique du Nord et la Guerre* p. 128.

Millerand's description, along with that of Barbusse and the two articles in *Le Petit Marseillais* all stress the fondness of colonial troops to the bayonet. This partly mirrors the prevalence of descriptions of French soldiers using "Rosalie" in the early months of the war, but also suggests a common perception that backward races would be more proficient with blades rather than rifles.²²⁹

The belief in the unthinking bravery of Black and North African troops was not just restricted to popular opinion but was shared by their commanders and informed their utilisation during the war. For the generals Berdoulat and Blondlat who were commanders in the colonial army, the Senegalese troops were incontestably brave but were unable to fulfil specialist positions.²³⁰ General Puypéroux commented on how his troops had gained the admiration of their comrades from the metropole due to their drive and their gallantry in the assault and spoke of their "entrain endiable".²³¹ Algerians were most likely to be used as shock troops while the deaths of tirailleurs were roughly similar in percentages to that of the French infantry, but they were more likely to be killed during assaults than in the trenches.²³²

When allocating divisions from French West Africa, certain tribes were considered to be more warlike than others. Those sent to the front line tended to be from Senegal, Haut-Sénégal, Niger and the Haute-Guinée while those kept back were from the Côte

228 Pradier, Besson, *L'Afrique du Nord et la Guerre* p. 109.

229 "Rosalie" was supposedly the nickname given by the French infantry to their bayonettes, though it tended to be a term more popular amongst propagandists than soldiers.

230 Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, p. 299. See also Joe Lunn, "Les Races Guerrières": Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 34-4 (1999) pp. 517-536.

231 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* p. 30, p. 52.

232 Meynier, *L'Algérie Révélée*, p.431. Jacques Thobie; Gilbert Meynier; Catherine Coquery Vidrovitch; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de la France Coloniale, 1914-1990*. Paris: Armand Colin (1990) p. 78.

The French military consistently worked on the basis that the more warlike a tribe had been in Africa, the better a soldier they would produce. This complemented an ideology that denied black men the ability to transcend their origins. These distinctions did not just apply within French West Africa, they also applied to the Madagascan troops who, unlike the Senegalese, Chantal Valensky argues, were “[...] ne sont pas conçues pour une utilisation combattante mais plutôt comme un élément d’appoint et dans des activités plus proches de la logistique que de l’attaque...”²³⁵

One problem with the perceived offensive vigour of colonial troops was that it was difficult to control them. Puypéroux said of his troops that the only possible fault they had was “d’être trop braves, d’avoir trop d’allant et trop de modant.”²³⁶ A report by a sergeant in a colonial regiment for the *Dépêche* described how they would make a successful attack. “Mais il faut réfréner l’ardeur des coloniaux; des ordres impérieux limitent l’avance pour la journée.”²³⁷ Similarly it was said of a regiment of tirailleurs in December 1916 that

les chefs de son section sont obligés de réfréner l’ardeur de leur hommes qui, ne se souciant pas de la ligne d’éclatement de notre artillerie dont on se rapprochait de plus en plus, n’avaient tous qu’une pensée: prendre le boche.²³⁸

Their belligerence was also believed to result in fighting outside the battlefield.

233 Michel, *L’Appel à L’Afrique*, p. 299.

234 Séché, *Les Noirs*, p. 18.

235 Chantal Valensky, *Le Soldat Occulté: Les Malgaches de l’Armée Française, 1884-1920*. Paris: L’Harmattan (1995) p. 276.

236 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* p. 11

237 *La Dépêche*, 13 August, 1918.

238 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, p. 432.

their childishness, as evinced by their puerile and unintelligible comments.

The focus on the attacking ability of non-white troops was also a way of glossing over their perceived deficiencies in defensive warfare, where they were believed to lack the discipline to consistently hold a position. The *Ouest-Éclair* quoted an English officer describing the capture of a fortress in German occupied Cameroon.

Les troupes européennes auraient tenu longtemps derrière ces fortifications puissantes. Mais les troupes indigènes, qui formaient la majeure partie de la garnison, furent démoralisées par l'explosion des obus à mélinite et à lyddite. Elles lâchèrent pied.²⁴⁰

Even in 1918, it was still considered necessary to have 3 white batallions in reserve behind General Puypéroux's Colonial division.²⁴¹

The army itself does seem to have been reasonably egalitarian, although a debate in the Chamber of Deputies, in March 1916 saw M. Candace, the deputy from Guadeloupe, and some other deputies from the colonies complaining of discrimination against black troops by white officers, and also when medals were awarded.²⁴² The white soldiers sent over to train prospective African soldiers were unaccustomed to dealing with Africans and provoked much resentment. At the end of 1916, the Senegalese deputy Blaise Diagne presented a dossier of complaints on this issue. These included insults such as “sale nègre”, “saligot” and “singe sauvage de la

239 Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, p. 388 (from an article on Senegalese camps in 1919, attributed by Michel to Guingard).

240 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 23 February, 1916.

241 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* p. 144

242 *La Petite Gironde*, 24 March, 1916.

avec les Arabes. Ils étaient, comme nous, les pauvres types. On était tous dans la même merde”.²⁴⁵ Black American soldiers also felt their treatment in France was far better than in their own country, and offered many compliments along the line of “These French people don’t bother with no color line business. They treat us so good that the only times I ever know I’m colored is when I look in the glass.”²⁴⁶

In the United States, the black politician Emmett J. Scott solicited the opinion of Colonel Edouard Réquin of the French Military Commission to the United States on the participation of French Negro troops in the Great War, in which he claimed the performance of the troops was “excellent”²⁴⁷

Recruited among the warrior tribes of Senegal and the Soudan these troops have great combatant qualities. They are particularly apt for attack and counter-attack, but they are primitive men without civilization---men who *cannot be compared from this point of view with colored Americans*. The black French soldiers are excellent grenadiers, but they are less prepared in the use of the machine gun and the automatic rifle, which demand a certain mechanical aptitude. They receive the same instructions as the French soldiers; these instructions are given to them by white officers and non-commissioned officers who understand them well, and who for this reason ought to be changed as little as possible²⁴⁸

Réquin’s arguments are entirely consistent with the other arguments made out before and during the war on the capabilities of black soldiers. They were brave, suited for attack, warriors by nature, but lacking civilisation and mechanical aptitude and needing the supervision of white officers.

243 Michel, *L’Appel à L’Afrique*, p. 123, p. 136.

244 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, pp. 420-424.

245 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, pp. 441-442.

246 MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, p. 121.

247 Emmett J. Scott. *Scott's official history of the American negro in the world war*, Washington D.C. (1919), [WWW] <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/comment/Scott/SCh10.htm>> [Accessed 31 October 2003]

248 Scott: *Scott's official history of the American negro in the world war*.

responded “Vous vous trouvez en conflit avec l’état-major du XIXe corps. Depuis un an, il n’a pas trouvé un seul lieutenant indigène digne d’être capitaine.”²⁴⁹ The conflict had little impact in advancing the case for the appointment of colonial officers from the positions held in this exchange.

If foreign soldiers were generally better regarded than foreign workers amongst the public, it is nevertheless true that they could still generate plenty of hostility. Marc Michel quotes Lucie Cousturier from her book *Inconnus chez moi* written just after the war, where she describes the reaction of the inhabitants of Saint-Raphaël who “se refusèrent, dès le premier bonjour échangé avec les étrangers, à dire ‘ce sont des singes’ pour affirmer ‘ce sont des enfants’”.²⁵⁰ There were several rumours of colonial soldiers having fired on striking French workers such as the story that in June 1917 colonial soldiers had fired at women strikers in St Etienne after French soldiers had refused. The idea that non-white troops might be used against French workers had been raised before the war, notably by Jaurès.²⁵¹ Although there was rarely any truth to these rumours they served to perpetuate suspicions amongst the French working class.

The letters and journals of soldiers also displayed several instances where fighting together had not altered their ideas of disgust towards blacks. One French soldier writing home commented about American black troops: “c’est même dégoûtant de les voir manger, car ils mélangent le tout dans une affreuse mixture qu’ils arrosent de nombreux

²⁴⁹ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 8 February, 1914.

²⁵⁰ Marc Michel, “L’image du soldat noir” in Nicolas Bancel; Pascal Blanchard; Laurent Gerverau (eds.) *Images et Colonies: Iconographie et propagande coloniale sur l’Afrique française de 1880 à 1962* Nanterre: BDIC-ACHAC (1993) p. 87.

²⁵¹ Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality* p. 131, Michel, *L’Appel à L’Afrique*, pp. 10-11. See also Stovall, “The Color Line Behind The Lines”, p. 762, p. 750.

enfant. Ces deux stéréotypes existaient avant la guerre, mais celui de 'bon sauvage' paraît être sorti des milieux étroits où il était confiné jusque-là grâce aux contacts réels, directs, entre Blancs et Noirs que permit la guerre.²⁵⁴

However while the two stereotypes of the “good” and “bad savage” did exist, they did not seem to work in opposition to each other. Instead aspects of both could be applied depending on the situation. While black soldiers could be portrayed as gentle and childlike in their dealings with the French population, they were still consistently depicted as ferocious in combat. While the bravery of colonial troops was a near universal theme, this maintained its association with savagery. André Kahn visited a cemetery where various African soldiers were buried and mused on the “[B]raves sauvages civilisés qui sont morts pour la civilisation?”²⁵⁵ While Kahn was clearly glad that the “savages” were on the French side and welcomed their presence, it didn't mitigate his beliefs in their brutality and primitivism. He recounted one episode that illustrated this.

Une anecdote vécue. Un tirailleur sénégalais chargé de garder un prisonnier boche le force à se coucher au fond d'un boyau. Il lui fait fermer les yeux en lui disant: 'Toi, camarade, toi plus souffrir de la guerre', et d'un coup de couteau, il lui tranche le cou. Puis il continue à le veiller et un voisin de la scène le voit couvrir l'Allemand d'une couverture et lui dire encore: 'toi, bon camarade, toi plus jamais souffrir!'²⁵⁶

252 Andre Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains; Le Concours Américain a la France en 1917-1918*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne (1976), p. 295.

253 Jacques Lovie, *Poilus Savoyards (1913-1918) Chronique d'une famille de Tarentais*, Arc-Isère, (1981) p. 128.

254 Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, p. 397.

255 André Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote 1914-1918*. Paris: Jean-Claude Simoën (1978), p. 167.

256 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 324.

Carriage.

According to the *Petit Marseillais*,

Tandis qu'ils ouvraient la fusillade contre les tranchées allemandes, des Sénégalais se glissaient dans l'herbe, rampant sans bruit comme des fauves. [...] A la vue des moricauds, les Allemands levèrent immédiatement les bras en criant: 'Kamerad! kamerad! pas kapout!'. [...] Les Sénégalais inspirent aux Allemands une frayeur terrible.²⁵⁸

The impression that black Africans were welcomed because of the savagery they were expected to unleash on the Germans is backed up by Bakary Diallo who reported that the shouts of "Bravo les tirailleurs sénégalais! Vive la France!" with which his tirailleurs were greeted were accompanied by shouts of "Couper têtes aux Allemands".²⁵⁹ The soldiers were certainly not expected to interact with the crowds acclaiming them and Joe Lunn quotes a soldier from Guinea, Kamara, saying that if troops turned to look at the people cheering them from the side of the road, they would be slapped by their officers.²⁶⁰

American blacks were largely seen as more civilised, and one soldier was at pains to point this out in his letter. "Enfin cette fois, nous avons des Américains avec nous, ce sont des Noirs de New York, des coustauds et non des sauvages, loin de là; ils n'aiment pas les Anglais ni les Américains blancs." Despite being "far from savage" they were still described as wanting to inflict brutal treatment on the enemy. "Ici tout

²⁵⁷ Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 154.

²⁵⁸ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 26 June, 1916.

²⁵⁹ Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, p. 392.

²⁶⁰ Joe Harris Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks: An Oral History of the West African Experience in France 1914-18" in Melvin E. Page (ed.) *Africa and the First World War*. Basingstoke: McMillan (1987) p.38. The chosen method for punishing soldiers who stepped out of line – slapping them – is another reminder of the low regard the troops were held in. Not only is it a humiliating and degrading punishment, but it carries strong echoes of the disciplining of children, as black men were often seen to

being unemployed due to the utilisation of German prisoners and American "dockers noirs". The article declared that hiring the French should take priority over all foreign workers, including those from Allied countries. Race was not mentioned again in the article and it's clear the writer would have opposed white Americans working in place of the French, but nonetheless the colour of the Americans was used to highlight the injustice.²⁶³

One issue which has received little attention so far is the regular instances of violence between different groups of foreigners in France. The camp of Dellys in Algeria had to separate the contingent from the Antilles from that of the Senegalese because of their antagonism. One particularly bloody confrontation at Sendets in November 1918 saw twenty nine Indochinese casualties (including nine fatalities) and three Senegalese though the cause of the dispute remained unknown.²⁶⁴ In January 1917 at the *pouderie* in Bassens there was a conflict between Chinese and "Arab" workers after the Chinese attacked an engineer and the Algerians came to defend him. The military intervened, killing two Chinese.²⁶⁵ In October 1917, police reported on a quarrel at Creusot between Chinese and Portuguese workers in which several serious injuries were caused.²⁶⁶

A letter written from the front by Louis Bonnet to his parents in March 1917 described a dispute on the front between Somalis and Madagascans, which had

be.

261 Jean Nicot (ed.) *Les poilus ont la parole: dans la tranchées, lettres du front, 1917-1918*. Brussels: Éditions Complexe (1998) pp. 433-434.

262 *La Dépêche*, 30 July, 1918.

263 *L'Information*, 8 December, 1917

264 Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, p. 380 Michel states that confrontations between the West Africans and other colonial contingents were rare though.

265 Meynier, *L'Algérie Révélée*, p. 469.

266 Michelle Marguin (ed.) *La Saône-et-Loire pendant la guerre de 14-18*, Macon: Centre

Conclusion

In a debate in the chamber of deputies, on the 30th January 1919, a deputy from Oran spoke on the issue of granting political rights to indigenous Algerians.

Il reconnaît la nécessité pour la France de payer la dette qu'elle a contractée vis-à-vis d'eux au cours de ces quatre années, pendant lesquelles ils n'ont cessé de témoigner de leur entier dévouement à la mère-patrie. Mais le projet actuel, en certains de ses articles, aurait, selon lui, l'inconvénient de diminuer la prééminence légitimement acquise des citoyens français.²⁶⁸

In so doing, he summed up the general attitude that prevailed in France that they were glad of the contribution played by colonial subjects to France's cause, and pleased with the loyalty displayed, but that it had done nothing to alter the superiority of white Frenchmen. In a conference in the summer of 1916 on the colonial contribution to France, Augustin Bernard outlined how he believed those North Africans who had served France should be rewarded. While lauding their efforts and sacrifices, Bernard believed that France's colonial subjects were not ready for political equality and should be rewarded in other fashions.

Ce n'est pas en conférant aux indigènes qui ont servi la France pendant la grande guerre des droits politique pour lesquels ils ne sont pas mûrs que nous les récompenserons comme il convient. En leur donnant des avantages pécuniaires et des pensions, en leur réservant certains emplois, nous témoignerons à ces héros qui ont versé leur sang sur les champs de bataille de l'Europe pour la noble

Departmental de Documentation Pédagogique (1984) 22 October, 1917.

²⁶⁷ Rémy Cazals, Claude Marquié, René Piniès, *Années Cruelles: 1914-1918*, Carcassonne: Atelier du Gué (1983) p. 118.

²⁶⁸ *La Petite Gironde*, 31 January, 1919.

cause de la France et de la civilisation, la reconnaissance à laquelle ils ont droit et que nous ne saurions leur marchander.²⁶⁹

F. Jourdier made a similar point regarding granting French citizenship to the electors of the four communes in Senegal.

Gratifier les indigènes des Communes de plein exercice du Sénégal de la qualité de citoyens français, c'est faire, parmi nos populations noires, une véritable révolution-là, le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est, on le voit, qu'elle serait prématurée,²⁷⁰

In February 1919, Muslims in North Africa were granted the right to vote in local elections, but this was one of a very few tangible rewards.²⁷¹

Most importantly of all, the French public was determined in its resolution to seek to exclude non-whites from France. The temporary nature of a colonial presence on French soil was regularly stressed, *L'Ouest-Éclair* talking of an opportune moment to examine the character of those from overseas who are "momentanément près de nous."²⁷² In *Troupes noires*, Alfred Guignard had spoken positively of his experiences in Africa and of the value of black troops. Yet his book also contained a fascinating episode towards the end, when he describes returning to France with a black servant.

Vous connaissez trop tard votre erreur de site et sa bonne face noire, là-bas si sympathique, se fait ici irritante et grotesque sans que le pauvre ait commis d'autre faute que les sottises suggérées à son ingénuité. Sérieusement, vous le voudriez ailleurs. Mais où?

He also expressed irritation at the waiter addressing him and his black companion as equals and the black man eating with his hands.²⁷³ It is surely significant that Guignard, who had enjoyed his experiences with blacks in Africa, should find them so irritating in France. During the war, black troops were kept rigorously segregated

269 *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 7 July, 1916.

270 *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 12 September, 1916.

271 Pedroncini, "Allocution introductive" p. 19. It should be noted that measures were already being taken in the Chamber in early 1914 to increase indigenous representation in Algerian government. Pradier, Besson, *L'Afrique du Nord et la Guerre* pp. 20-21.

272 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 23 January, 1918.

273 Guignard, *Troupes noires*, p. 309.

from French society, and forbidden to leave camp.²⁷⁴ In the *Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime* a Dr M. wrote that West African troops were soon hospitalised separately from French troops because their different cultures made co-habitation unpleasant for all concerned.

Les interminables palabres qu'aiment à tenir les indigènes à toute heure du jour et de la nuit, paraissent bientôt fastidieux à des Européens déprimés: ces derniers voient un manque d'égards prémédité dans un fait qui n'est qu'une habitude nègre invétérée et même une forme de la courtoisie chez les Noirs. D'autre part, l'indigène, le plus innocemment du monde, crache abondamment autour de lui et ne craint pas de souiller les murs et la literie de sa salive colorée en rouge par la kola. Je passe sous silence d'autres incongruités que réproouve notre éducation et que tolère la sienne... Les reproches mutuels font vite place aux injures; le ressentiment et le dégoût succèdent à la confiance et à la camaraderie du début.²⁷⁵

Although the writer does not explicitly criticise the behaviour of the black troops, it is obvious from the examples and language he uses that he considers the mentality of the colonial soldiers the source of the antagonism, and not their metropolitan comrades. The impression that the writer offers is that while they could fight together with their white colleagues, the primitive habits of the West Africans meant they could not be expected to live in the same communities. The majority of colonial troops were despatched home as soon as possible after the armistice, even before peace was secured. Clemenceau was sending black troops home in January 1919, even as Foch was begging the United States to slow its own withdrawal.²⁷⁶

For most people who did not distrust non-whites, the tendency was to ignore them. Hans Lusenbrink notes "La marginalisation des soldats coloniaux dans les bulletins militaires, mais aussi dans la presse des années 1914-1918 est frappante." Dewitte argues that the war did nothing to alter the general opinion of the French towards

274 Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks" pp. 36-38.

275 *La Dépêche Coloniale et Maritime*, 28 August, 1917.

276 Keith L. Nelson, "The 'Black Horror on the Rhine': Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy" in *Journal of Modern History* 42-4 (1970) n. 31 pp. 612-613.

their colonies – that of indifference.²⁷⁷ This viewpoint was expressed at the time by Diala, a member of the Girondine section of the Ligue coloniale française.²⁷⁸

General Puypéroux's account of the 3rd Colonial Division during the war began with a poem entitled *L'Âme Coloniale* by the Abbé Miot, who had been the chaplain for the division. Written in August 1918, it is worth quoting in its entirety as it contains almost all the standard stereotypes about colonial soldiers, apparently intact despite Miot's proximity to the soldiers.

Comment la définir l'âme coloniale,
et dire, cher Docteur, la valeur sans égale
De ces braves soldats, ornés de maints chevrons,
Dont la guerre a semé les os sur tous les fronts?

A la Coloniale, on aime l'aventure
Et l'on a peu de goût pour la guerre d'usure.
On bout d'impatience au fond des noirs boyaux;
On voudrait toujours voir des horizons nouveaux.
Ah! vienne le grand jour! C'est alors qu'on s'élançe,
Qu'on couvre les plateaux, comme une mer immense.
On bondit, on se cache, on rebondit encore;
On se moque des coups et l'on nargue la mort.
Il faut les avoir vus, ces invincibles diables,
Saisir le Boche en des corps à corps effroyables,
A Massiges, Flaucourt, à Moisy, Vauxaillon,
A la ferme Hurtebise, à Vauclerc, à Foulon,
Autour de Reims; enfin, lorsque la fourragère
Orna de son reflet leur épaule guerrière.
Tambours, un ban d'honneur! Car ces braves amis,
En tout secteur, ont bien mérité du pays.

Ici, je voudrais bien détruire la légende
Qui fait, de ces héros, une horde, une bande
De troupiers sans scruples, au pillages acharnés,
Répandant la terreur, au loin, de tous côtés.

277 Lügenbrink, "Les troupes coloniales dans la guerre" p. 82. Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, p. 11.

278 *La Petite Gironde*, 5 January, 1919.

J'ai perçu, maintes fois, ce cri parmi les foules:
"Les Coloniaux! Vite, cachez vos poules!"
C'est un reproche injuste et cruel à l'égard
De tous ces grands enfants au clair et doux regard.

Et toi, Coulibaly, que dis-tu? Sois sincère.
Et la noir de répondres: "Y en a bon la guerre
Avec Français!" Bravo! c'est bien, Coulibaly.
Je sais qu'on peu partout de toi l'on a médité.
C'était en mai dernier, à l'époque tragique
Où nos soldats pliaient sous l'effort germanique.
Le haut commandement lance Coulibaly
A l'assaut de Tinquaux, derrière Champfleury,
Face au Boche. Aussitôt, brandissant Rosalie,
Le noir se précipite, hurlant avec furie.
Pas un ne recula. Les noirs jusqu'aux derniers,
Aimèrent mieux mourir que d'être prisonniers.
Ce n'est pas moi, c'est le *Vorwaerts* qui le publie.
Vous voyez ce qu'on dit des noirs... en Germanie.²⁷⁹

The first verse emphasizes the bravery and sacrifice of the colonial troops. The second verse starts by stressing that they fight for adventure not for money, and highlights their reckless courage that laughs at death, while the "invincible diables" hints that this bravery isn't quite human. The third verse is still more revealing, displaying the fear and suspicion that continued to be directed at colonial troops by the French population. Of course Miot claims this is an unjustified slur on the overgrown children of France's colonies. The last verse sees Miot's idea of the childlike Black soldier personified by "Coulibaly" who in one sentence reveals himself to be straightforward, loyal and ignorant. The end of the poem comes back to the primary image of the Black soldier throughout the war: charging headlong into battle, screaming, brandishing a bayonet, seeking death or glory and striking terror into the Germans.

If the war itself did little to change attitudes, Lügenbrink argues that significant change occurred with the occupation of the Rhineland and the German opposition to

the presence of non-white soldiers. “Cette campagne allemande contre les soldats français de couleur, et en particulier les tirailleurs sénégalais, eut en France un immense retentissement public.”²⁸⁰ He concludes that

Plus que la guerre elle-même, ce furent ainsi les conséquences qui modifièrent profondément l’image du monde colonial et de ses habitants en France: la virulence de la campagne allemande contre les troupes de couleur eut pour résultat une attitude s’identification qui affecta, à travers la presse et les expositions coloniales, également la grande masse de la population française. Et l’émergence des premiers écrivains africains - parmi lesquels on compte avec Bakary Diallo et Lamine Senghor plusieurs anciens tirailleurs - finit par remettre en cause radicalement le paternalisme condescendant qui avait longtemps dominé les rapports entre métropolitains et populations des colonies.²⁸¹

Dewitte also notes that the German campaign against the black troops in the Rhineland aroused French support for those troops.²⁸² It is outside the scope of this study to examine these arguments, although Brett Berliner’s excellent study of racial attitudes in France between the wars demonstrates the continuing presence of contradictory discourses based on common assumptions of black inferiority and irrationality. He argues that notions of black savagery and cannibalism were very popular in the post-war period as the French sought to respond to the horrors of war by once again siting barbarism firmly outside of Europe in a black Other. This discourse existed alongside one that justified France’s colonial role by reference to the progress made by non-white colonial subjects under French tutelage.²⁸³ It can be noted that the fundamental idea of the strange and inferior colonial other still existed in 1929 when General Trentinian prefaced a book on France’s West African empire by Rondet-Saint, with the argument that it would be of interest to readers “curieux de connaître des pays [...] où l’homme et la nature diffèrent, en effet, profondément de l’homme de la race blanche et des contrées qu’ils habitent.”²⁸⁴

279 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale*, pp. 7-8.

280 Lüsenbrink, “Les troupes coloniales dans la guerre” p. 83.

281 Lüsenbrink, “Les troupes coloniales dans la guerre” pp. 84-85.

282 Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, pp. 49-50.

283 Brett A. Berliner, *Ambivalent Desires: The Exotic Black Other in Jazz-age France*. Amherst : University of Massachusetts Press (2002) pp. 126-130.

284 Maurice Rondet-Saint, *Dans notre Empire Noir*. Paris: Société d’Édition Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales (1929) p. v.

CHAPTER 2 - Race and Nationality

People from France's colonies and those with different coloured skins were not the only ones viewed in racial terms. Both popular and scientific discourse ascribed national characteristics to white and European peoples on a racial basis. The French argued that the outrages committed by the Germans were the result of a cruelty and a warlike fanaticism inherent in their racial make-up, while vacillations in Russian policy were understood as the manifestations of Russian's Slavic nature. Thus in his book about the English, John Charpentier argued that what distinguished them from the Germans was the Celtic influence on the Teutonic race: "l'Anglais est le produit d'une grette saxonne, entrée sur le tronc celtique motile"²⁸⁵ Laird Boswell has argued that in both popular and scientific discourse, Alsace-Lorraine was described as having formed the borderline between the Celts and Germanic peoples. The racial differences between Alsatians and Germans were widely commented upon.²⁸⁶ The war, and France's historical conflict with Germany was often portrayed as a racial struggle, such as when the Lyon branch of the *Ligue populaire des pères et mères de familles nombreuses* argued in its periodical that victory, however crushing, could not kill the "hydre germanique", only the repopulation of France could effectively combat "la maudite race germanique"²⁸⁷

The Germans were the nationality who received the most scrutiny during the war in the French press and in popular imagery and they were almost universally condemned *en masse* in racial terms. An article in *L'Ouest-Éclair* offers a good illustration of this, when it argued that "[la] race allemande s'acharne sur les hôpitaux, par le canon et par avion."²⁸⁸ This is significant partly for the implication that the atrocious act of attacking hospitals is acceptable to the German race. More important is the assumption that the German race can be seen as a monolithic bloc, with responsibility for the outrage shared by every member of that race, not simply the military that

285 John Charpentier, *Notre Nouvelle Amie L'Angleterre*, Paris: Hachette (1919) p. 66.

286 Laird Boswell, "From Liberation to Purge Trials in the 'Mythic Provinces': Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918-1920 in *French Historical Studies* 23-1 (2000) pp. 138-139.

287 Ligue populaire des pères et mères de familles nombreuses, *Nos Enfants. Organe de la section lyonnaise et des sections du Rhône*. March-April 1918, Lyon: J. Poncet (1916) p. 41.

288 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 26 August, 1917.

ordered and carried out the attacks. This assumption reappeared consistently throughout the war. Writing under the name ADV, a journalist for the *Petit Marseillais* summed up the general argument made in that paper, that the Germans had the rulers they deserved.

S'il est vrai que les peuples n'ont que les gouvernements qu'ils méritent, le peuple allemand a parfaitement les chefs qui lui conviennent, et ceux-ci sont imprégnés aujourd'hui jusque dans leur moelle de ce militarisme prussien qu'il eut écraser à tout prix. [...] Tous, aujourd'hui, on à un même degré [...] le mépris et la jalousie du Français, la haine de l'Anglais, dont ils envient la rang dans le monde et l'inquiétude que leur cause le voisinage du colosse russe, toujours prêt à refréner leurs excès.

The article went on to suggest that the German army was the “synthèse de l'orgueil, de la fourberie, de la bestialité germaniques”.²⁸⁹

The other nations that participated in the war may not have received the invective that the French directed against the Germans, but they were similarly assessed in racial terms. Whether these nations allied with the French, opposed them or stayed neutral clearly influenced whether their positive or negative racial characteristics were stressed; but in each case, analyses of their actions were based on received ideas from before the war. As with colonial workers and soldiers, so the wartime actions of white foreigners were understood within a framework of traditional thinking. However, there was no equivalent to the broad similarities that characterised French views over non-European peoples, of their inferiority, their irrationality, their potential for violence and their unsophistication. While discussions over individual non-white peoples could be considered as part of a larger discourse on non-whites more generally, there was no such universalising concepts for white foreigners. Furthermore, when discussing white peoples, there was a much greater role allotted to how historical, social and cultural factors could have affected the character of the people, in addition to their racial make-up. Given sufficient time it was possible for different white races to integrate as a nation, though this might take many years; *L'Ouest-Éclair* compared building a nation to building a medieval cathedral in terms of the time it took.²⁹⁰ By contrast, a comparable integration of non-white peoples into

289 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 15 October, 1914.

290 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 3 February, 1917.

a white society was seen as unrealistic.

One example of how national characteristics could be seen as dependent on historic factors as well as race was the United States, where the recent and extensive intermingling of nations and ethnicities complicated the picture. As was discussed in the last chapter, French observers tended to be suspicious of the feasibility of a nation successfully assimilating such a mix of races, each with their own innate characteristics. Various traits consistently applied to Americans included energy, idealism, industriousness and flair for business, but as these qualities arose from the national culture of the United States they could also be seen as co-existing with attributes based upon ethnicity. Thus, German-Americans received praise, in certain contexts, for having thrown off their warlike, Teutonic history and embraced the virtues of the United States. At other times, they could be regarded with suspicion as forever imbued with immutable racial characteristics. Again, the adaptability of French discourse helped them to maintain traditional judgements throughout the war. Significantly however, while the various white races of the United States were seen as being capable of having a shared national identity, non-white Americans were usually seen as separate from this shared nature.

Germans

John Horne and Alan Kramer argue that, from 1870 onwards, French intellectuals had viewed Germany in a dualistic manner. The positive aspects of Germany varied according to political perspective, but this was consistently balanced with the negative aspect of the militarist expansionism associated with Prussia.²⁹¹ For Horne and Kramer these theories allowed an easy explanation of Germany's actions in 1914, as a "triumph of the negative over the positive Germany." This dualism was expressed occasionally during the war itself. Gabriel Seailles wrote in the *Dépêche* that "la défaite des Hohenzollern sera la victoire de la vieille Allemagne, de l'Allemagne libérale des Goethe, des Schiller, des Kant, des Humboldt, qu'ils ont

291 John Horne and Alan Kramer, "German "Atrocities" and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers' Diaries" in *The Journal of Modern History*, 66-1. (1994) pp. 13-14.

vaincue et asservie.”²⁹² However, this was a rare expression of positive German potential, during the war at least. L. Faber in the *Petit Marseillais* also made a division between some of the great figures of Germany’s past and its miserable present, but there was no sense of a noble Germany struggling under Hohenzollern tyranny.

Si Gœthe était de ce monde, il vous vomirait. D’autres vous ont vomis qui vous donnent de votre kulture un incommensurable orgueil. Votre illustre Wieland a dit que c’était un malheur d’être né Allemand. Et n’oubliez pas la parole écrite de Schopenhauer: “En prévision de ma mort, je confesse que je méprise la nation allemande à cause de sa bêtise infinie et que je rougis de lui appartenir.”²⁹³

More common were accusations that the Germans were an uncivilized race, doomed to be barbaric and savage. Not even those who had been subject to a civilizing French influence were salvageable. These ideas had a long history. A columnist in *La Petite Gironde*, on the subject of Germans naturalised as French, could quote Victor Hugo approvingly “Ce sont des immigrants indésirables qui ne pourront jamais dépouiller leur origine. C’est l’espion d’hier, d’aujourd’hui, de demain, de toujours.” Gustave Téry published a book containing a plethora of articles from 1908-1914 declaiming the presence of foreigners, particularly Germans in France and their malign influence. He had written 6 years before the war

Regardez ici, regardez là: de quelque côté que vous tourniez les yeux, vous apercevrez des Allemands installés chez nous, qui nous exploitent ou nous espionnent, et, sournoisement ou cyniquement, préparent la conquête de notre pays qu’ils prétendent achever demain par les armes.²⁹⁴

The need for eternal vigilance against the German menace was down to their innate character. The *Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme* took a similar line, arguing that no amount of naturalisation could alter a German’s essential nature.²⁹⁵ Paul Gaultier’s book on the German mentality sought to explain why the French must not be fooled again as to the true nature of Germans, whatever veneer of civilisation they might display.

292 *La Dépêche*, 5 September, 1917.

293 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 14 October, 1914.

294 Gustave Téry, *Les Allemands chez nous*, Paris (1918) p. v

295 *La Petite Gironde*, 1 August, 1916. *Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme*, 23 February, 1917.

Sur la foi de Mme de Staël, de Taine et de Renan, nous avons longtemps pris les Allemands pour des êtres placides, doux et honnêtes, sentimentaux et rêveurs. La guerre de 1870 avait à peine effleuré nos illusions. Nous tenions, en tout cas, ce peuple pour civilisé. Il était arrivé à un haut degré de science, de littérature, d'industrie, d'agriculture, de commerce. Il a eu de grands hommes, il en a encore dans toutes les branches de l'activité humaine. [...] Eh bien! les premiers actes de ses armées en débouchant sur la terre étrangère furent des actes d'horreur, des crimes sans nom et, ce qui dépasse tout, des crimes systématiques, des crimes commandés. Des crimes enseignés.²⁹⁶

Just as de Morgan had cautioned against being taken in by the superficial trappings of civilisation in the Ottoman Empire, Gaultier's argument suggests that the French should not be fooled by the achievements of German civilisation.

For Dr. Bérillon, who wrote a book just after the war on the inherent and unchanging nature of the races of the world, these outrages were inevitable as the "noble préoccupation d'épargner et de protéger les gens désarmés," was a Latin characteristic, utterly alien to the German mentality.²⁹⁷ Gaultier took a slightly different line, arguing that although there was always the potential for barbarism within Germany, it did not always rise to the surface, and had only recently reappeared.

L'Allemand d'autrefois, je veux dire celui du XVIIIe siècle et de la première moitié du XIXe- n'était pas moins honnêtes et loyal. La simplicité de ses mœurs, que Mme de Staël se plaisait à célébrer, était, avec la modération de ses désirs, la garantie de sa probité, de sa franchise, de sa patience, toutes qualités qui le firent longtemps rechercher comme le modèle des employés.

Mais ceci, hélas! est de l'histoire ancienne. Bien avant la guerre, poésie et conscience avaient à peu près disparus de la Nouvelle Allemagne, [...] Pressés de jouir et, pour louer, de gagner de l'argent, ils ont abandonné la vie tranquille pour la fièvre des affaires et, avec elle, les vertus un peu vieillottes sus lesquelles la barbarie ancestrale des Germains demeurait endormies.²⁹⁸

For Gaultier then it was the modernisation of Germany that, paradoxically, had aroused the ancestral barbarism of Germany. Gaultier specifically criticises the "fièvre des affaires", an attack characteristic of both Catholic and left wing censure of Germany.

²⁹⁶ Paul Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande et la Guerre*, (3rd Edition) Paris: Félix Alcan (1918) pp. 1-2.

²⁹⁷ Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 26.

In his history of the war, Victor Giraud similarly criticised German economic modernisation in an attack that neatly combined Germany's scientific advances and its moral decline in a deeply conservative argument. For him, science had transformed the material conditions of life that had remained largely unchanged from prehistoric times to the nineteenth century. Yet morality had not changed with it, indeed if anything it had slightly regressed. Hence, there was a rupture in the equilibrium of humanity.

Si cette rupture s'accroissait encore, l'humanité, enlisée dans les soi-disant progrès matériels, finirait par oublier qu'elle a une âme, et, sous prétexte d'industrialisme et d'impérialisme, les peuples retourneraient infailliblement à la barbarie primitive, barbarie d'autant plus barbare qu'elle est plus savante, d'autant plus meurtrière qu'elle est plus raffinée.

Germany, naturally, was the obvious example of this.

Ivre de science positive, de machinisme et de puissance matérielle, l'Allemagne, pervertie par la Prusse, a voulu soumettre l'univers à son joug de fer; elle a dépouillé tout scrupule, abdiqué toute préoccupation d'ordre moral, méconnu tout droit; pour satisfaire ses instincts de proie, elle s'est ruée tout entière au pillage, elle a versé des flots de sang, elle s'est retrouvée l'héritière des anciens Barbares, adorateurs des vieux dieux païens; elle s'est déchristianisée, elle s'est déshumanisée: cela volontairement, et d'un commun accord.²⁹⁹

This Catholic critique of Germany for having lost its soul in pursuit of material gains is one that was not shared across the French political spectrum. For secular conservatives in France, while they might deplore many things about their powerful neighbour to the east, they admired the way that its economy ran. The forgemaster and advocate of industrial modernisation Camille Cavallier argued that

En Allemagne, où le travail est honoré, où l'argent est apprécié ouvertement, sans fausse honte, où la natalité est infiniment plus grande qu'en France, l'Industrie et le Commerce trouvent facilement les sujets dont ils ont besoin.³⁰⁰

298 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, pp. 4-5.

299 Victor Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, Paris: Hachette (1919-1920) pp. 17-18.

In a report made to the Lyon Chamber of Commerce in February 1916, the Vice-President, Morel, noted that they were aware of the foresight of the Germans, their methodicalness, their ruthlessness at business and, he had to admit, their more intense working practices.³⁰¹ Also in 1916, the Chamber of Commerce in Clermont-Ferrand noted that the Germans had understood, much better than the French had, the commercial potential of the thermal industry, and that the industry was well managed and well regulated.³⁰² *France Libre* argued that before the war, France hadn't been able to compete with the industrial development of Germany and that in the Sarre after the armistice the productivity of workers had immediately tripled, due to better methods of working.³⁰³ One thing that distinguishes the French condemnation of the German "barbarians" from their views of non-white "savages" is that the latter were never put forward as possessing customs or practices that the French could learn from.

Despite this, the French did do their best to explain away the technical and technological advancement of the Germans. Instead of having real ability for abstract and original thought, the attribute that set the truly advanced peoples apart, they were just expert at imitation and of exploiting their intellectual resources to the full. According to *La Dépêche* "Les ressources du génie français sont incontestablement supérieures à celles du génie allemand. Par malheur, les ressources du génie français ne sont pas aussi méthodiquement exploitées que celles du génie allemand."³⁰⁴ Another of its writers, Dr Toulouse, made the same point two years later, as did the *Petit Marseillais*.³⁰⁵ The *Ouest-Éclair* characterised the German attempts to replicate the tank as indicative of a "[r]ace d'imitateurs, sot bétail".³⁰⁶

Paul-Louis Hervier's pen portraits of prominent Germans took a similar line. He argued of Admiral von Tirpitz that he had an extraordinary capacity for organisation and imitation, but had nothing innovative to offer. "Il n'a rien créé de nouveau, il a servilement copié la marine anglaise. Alfred von Tirpitz est donc pirate deux fois."

300 Camille Cavallier, *L'Avenir de la France*, Paris: Alcan (1918) p.9

301 Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *L'Après-Guerre*, Lyon: Rey (1916) p. 5

302 Chambre de Commerce de Clermont-Ferrand, *Défense et mise en valeur des Stations Thermales Françaises. Hôtels réquisitionnés*. Clermont-Ferrand: G. Mont-Louis (1916) p. 2

303 *Le France Libre*, 19 January, 1920.

304 *La Dépêche*, 9 January, 1916.

305 *La Dépêche*, 17 May, 1918, *Le Petit Marseillais*, 25 July, 1916.

Likewise, the prosperity of Krupp had supposedly been achieved by copying foreign inventions.³⁰⁷ According to Giraud, the Kaiser had an intelligence “vive et rapide, mais superficielle et peu originale,” while German generals lacked military genius, but were totally in command of the science of modern warfare.³⁰⁸ Even in the months before the war, Hugues le Roux dismissed the intellectual development of the Germans.

les Allemands fondent plus que tout autre peuple dans le creuset où les races se mêlent [...] Ce que les Allemands ne peuvent changer du jour au lendemain, c'est leur substance même, leur peasanteur physique et intellectuelle, leur lenteur de conception.³⁰⁹

Le Roux did add: “Nous connaissons leur qualités, qui sont hautes,” but only as a precursor to listing all the ways in which they were inferior to other nations.³¹⁰

If the French were not united in their condemnation of German business, they were much more unanimous in decrying the role of Prussia in Germany's descent into the moral abyss. Giraud mentions the influence of Prussia directly in his anti-modernist diatribe quoted earlier, while by arguing that Germany lost its way after the mid-Nineteenth Century, Gaultier is also citing that decline at a time when Prussian influence became dominant. Gaultier also made this argument explicitly.

“La Prusse a, d'après moi, non seulement ‘prussifié’ l'Allemagne conformément à un dessin préconçu, mais aussi à la manière d'un ferment qui transforme un milieu approprié. Elle l'a ‘prussifié’ en faisant ressurgir, volontairement mais aussi par exemple, par les promesses échangées et par une étonnante prospérité matérielle, l'ancien barbare teuton qui dormait, sous le couvert de la civilisation, au cœur de l'Allemand moderne.”³¹¹

It was not just money and Prussia that had corrupted Germany. Their sexual morality was also considered suspect. The French had associated homosexuality with the Germans for years as well as the appearance, in 1896, of a book that was entitled

306 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 25 October, 1916.

307 Paul-Louis Hervier, *Silhouettes Allemandes*, Paris: Éditions de “La Nouvelle Revue” (1916) p. 47, p. 243.

308 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 7, p. 83.

309 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 27 February, 1914.

310 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 27 February, 1914.

Les Invertis (le vice allemand), and the Eulenburg trials of 1907 helped encourage this belief.³¹² Once the war began, books such as *Les Invertis* were used to popularise the idea of sexual perversity amongst Germans.³¹³ Gaultier described one of the ways in which German decadence was occurring as “à côté de la prostitution avouée, faut-il citer le prostitution clandestine et la prostitution contre nature, qui fait de tels ravages outre-Rhin”.³¹⁴ Modernisation had also ensured that normal gender relations were disturbed in other ways: “le Hausfrau se mourait, tuée par le féminisme et quelques autres nouveautés. Les femmes, s’ennuyant de rester à la maison, trouvaient tout naturel de passer le soirée dans les endroits publics.”³¹⁵ Gaultier linked deviant German sexual practices with their wartime conduct by noting “l’indéniable penchant au sadisme qui est l’un des traits dominants du vice allemand.”³¹⁶ In General Puypéroux’s account of his regiment during the war, he described how the Germans were forced to retreat after the battle of the Marne, leaving behind huge quantities of obscene photographs. Similar material was found with their prisoners. “Eh! disent nos braves gens, c’est cela la fameuse “kultur”! C’est cela l’Allemagne chaste, pudibonde, la nation élue de Dieu!!”³¹⁷ Here Puypéroux’s indignation seems to be as much about the pretensions of the Germans to being a standard bearer for humanity as their immorality.

There were also attempts to demonise Germans not just as barbaric humans, but also as literally monstrous, with an appearance and characteristics that were abnormal. They tended to be portrayed either as decadent Prussian officers or obese and grotesque Bavarian peasants.³¹⁸ In both instances, an element of racial degeneration appears to underpin the picture. Their assumed rank odour and prodigious appetites

311 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, pp. 26-27.

312 Martha Hanna, “Nativity, Homosexuality, and the Controversy over Corydon” in Jeffery Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan, Jr, *Homosexuality in Modern France*. New York: Oxford University Press (1996) p. 203.

313 *La Petite Gironde*, 1 August, 1916.

314 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, p. 14.

315 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, p.13.

316 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, p. 14. See also Jean-Yves LeNaour, *Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande guerre : les moeurs sexuelles des Français, 1914-1918*. Paris: Aubier (2002) pp. 38-39.

317 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* p. 26

318 Ruth Harris, “The ‘Child of the Barbarian’: Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War” in *Past & Present* 141 (1993) pp. 182-189.

were the subject of a scientific study by Dr. Bérillon during the war and his argument was summed up by Paul Ginisty in the *Petit Marseillais*.

L'abjecte goinfrerie, l'odeur fétide des Allemands, leur goût déterminé pour l'ordure sont tellement caractéristiques que les hommes de science ont étudié ce plaisir trouvé dans l'ignoble comme un phénomène.³¹⁹

In his post-war book, Bérillon maintained a similar line, talking of “de *bromidrose fétide* de la race allemande, l'odeur nauséabonde *sui-generis* qui s'impose si péniblement à l'olfaction quand on se trouve en contact avec des Allemands.”³²⁰

Norton Cru noted that an unpleasant smell amongst the Germans was “d'un phénomène mentionnée par presque tous les écrivains du front et attribué par quelques-uns, les fanatiques, à la nature bestiale de l'Allemand.”³²¹ Cru himself favoured the explanation offered in the journal of Abbé Bessières, which he described as the only scientific attempt to explain the phenomenon. “Une insupportable odeur de suint, de suif, me saisit à la gorge, l'odeur caractéristique du blessé allemand, due à l'imperméabilité des habits, qui ne permet pas l'évaporation de la sueur.”³²²

It must be questioned whether the virulence of anti-German rhetoric espoused in the home front was shared by the troops. Jewish *brancardier* André Kahn's war journal displayed very different attitudes towards Germans in the abstract compared to those he encountered personally. In captivity on the 27th of August, 1914 he said

A frôler chaque jour des Allemands, je commence à ouvrir les yeux et à comprendre qu'ils sont des hommes tout comme nous. [...] La première question est: 'Vous avez marié? Vous avez des enfants?' et leur conclusion unanime: 'la guerre est un fléau! Vite la paix.' Sages paroles!³²³

However, once he got back on the front line the hostility returned and on the 10th of September he lambasted:

319 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 22 October, 1915.

320 Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, p. 7 (italics in the original).

321 Jean Norton Cru, *Témoins*, p. 92.

322 Albert Bessières, *Le Train Rouge*, quoted in Cru, *Témoins*, p. 92.

323 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 18.

Ces cochons d'Allemands ont profité des quelques heures de répit que nous leur accordions pour enterrer les morts pour bombarder une ville libre! Les salauds! Ils méritent qu'on les extermine jusqu'au dernier.

A month later on October 16th he was similarly critical of despicable behaviour from the Germans: "Ces cochons ont, dans bien des endroits, fait leur besoins sur le visage et sur la poitrine des morts français. Quels sauvages!"³²⁴ Yet his hostility seemed to be attenuated when he encountered a German prisoner in January 1915 who "reste convaincu que l'Allemagne et la France arriveront à s'entendre et, peut-être un jour, à s'allier. Il nous fait beaucoup d'honneur." Only two days later though, he was again bemoaning that: "Oh! La sauvage obstination des Boches à anéantir les innocents!"³²⁵ Ultimately however, Kahn shared the view of the German prisoner, that Germany and France were not doomed to eternal enmity and believed that the war would result in the fall of the Hohenzollerns and a pacific republican Germany.³²⁶

Kahn's lack of hostility towards German prisoners was not unique. Kamara, a volunteer from Guinea, noted with surprise and indignation that the French would "chat and joke and play with their enemies" after capturing them.³²⁷ Raymond Franco's war journal made several references to "ces maudits Boches" but otherwise displayed little vitriol towards the enemy.³²⁸ There may even have been those who retained positive views of Germany similar to those expressed in 1921 by Marshal Lyautey in conversation with the ambassador, Fernet.

Je regrette de ne pas porter l'uniforme allemand. C'est aujourd'hui le seul peuple qui ait le sens de l'avenir, le goût de l'ordre, le consentement à la hierarchie, le sens monarchique, l'instinct de conservation. C'est sans doute un grand mal que nous avons gagné la guerre. Les Anglais sont des salauds, les Italiens des cuistres. Nous n'avions qu'une chance de nous entendre, de faire un bloc européen contre les infiltrations judéo-bolcheviques, c'était l'Allemagne. Je ne dis pas ça à tout le monde, je regrette de ne pas être un maréchal allemand.³²⁹

324 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 20. p. 31.

325 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 95.

326 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 133.

327 Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks", p. 39.

328 Raymond Franco, "Exposé Journalier de ma Vie Militaire pendant la guerre 1914-1918" in Marcel Lachiver (ed.) *Contribution à l'histoire du Val d'Oise. Aspects de la guerre 1914-1918*. Pontoise: Société Historique de Pontoise (1986) eg. p. 214, p. 215, p. 222.

329 Philippe Gautier, *La germanophobie*, Paris: Éditions Détéma, 2nd ed. (1999) p. 46.

In fact, outward manifestations of extreme anti-Germanism were more common at the rear than at the front. During mobilisation violence was directed against Germans and Austrian inhabitants of France and shops owned or believed to be owned by people from those countries. One German caught up in it claimed “Les Français étaient comme fous; ils considéraient tout Allemand comme un espion.”³³⁰

The foreigners who would have been expected to be the most loathed were the German prisoners of war, who were employed at the rear. There is little doubt that these men were not well regarded. However, by contrast to the mixed response to the possible usage of foreign labour from other countries, they were the objects of incessant demand. In general, the first preoccupation of almost everyone concerned with the workforce was the possibility of utilising underemployed soldiers, or those on leave. If this proved impossible, then prisoners of war were considered to be the next best option, sometimes simply because they were a convenient source of labour. A report by the departmental sub-committee for economic action in the Haute-Vienne commented that prisoners were “très utilement” employed in the department. A member of the commission, Viardot, commented that prisoners were required in the Port de l’Aurence factory as the work required very robust workers and all capable French had been mobilised.³³¹

The major reason for preferring to employ Germans rather than any other alternative appears to be that the discipline that employers were able to enforce over the prisoners of war. Describing the situation in Anjou, the comte d’Andigné explained that German prisoners were acceptable as they were kept under surveillance “tandis que les agriculteurs tunisiens devraient être surveillés par nos fermiers qui s’en défient un peu.”³³² In 1917, an industrialist in Lyon told Swiss authorities that he didn’t want to see mutual repatriation of prisoners of war, because he employed 200 German prisoners and those who would replace them, whether Annamites or repatriated

330 Jean-Claude Farcy, *Les Camps de Concentration Français de la première guerre mondiale (1914-1920)*. Paris: Anthropos (1995) p. 12.

331 AN F/12/8009/1, 18 April, 1918.

332 Alain Jacobzone, *En Anjou, loin du front*. Vauchréten: Editions Ivan Davy (1988) pp. 201-202.

Frenchmen, were less “aptés au travail.”³³³ A report by the executive delegation of the port commission claimed that the officers in charge of disembarkation believed that German workers were better:

Avec les allemands, travail égal sans qu’il soit rapide, aucune perte de temps dans la relève des équipes de cale (qui se relèvent toutes les 2 heures); aucune querelle. Avec les dockers, travail inégal, le plus souvent lent, arrêts causés par les querelles fréquentes surtout l’après-midi, impossible d’obtenir qu’une équipe de cale ne quitte son travail qu’après la descente de l’équipe de relève.³³⁴

The Ministry of Agriculture wrote to the port authorities at Bordeaux suggesting that the contingent of German prisoners employed on the docks could be exchanged with Senegalese workers, because the agricultural productivity of prisoners of war was excellent. Those in charge at Bordeaux rejected the idea as “l’expérience de la main d’œuvre exotique pour nos propres opérations (chinois et africains) et pour celles des bases américaines (nègres) montre sans contest que sa valeur est loin d’atteindre même celle des P.G.”³³⁵

The popularity of prisoners of war as workers was such that there was great competition to acquire their services. The Comité Consultatif d’action économique for the Rennes region in January 1916 saw the employment of prisoners of war as essential for forestry work, and complained vehemently at not being granted any extra German labour.³³⁶ In the committee for the Nantes region, a M. de Guebriant claimed that the Midi was getting more than their fair share of prisoners and that they should be redistributed towards the Finistère and the Vendée.³³⁷

There were some cases where hostility towards Germans hindered the usage of prisoners. The Deux-Sevres committee of economic action recommended utilising German prisoners, despite some misgivings.

333 AN F/23/5.

334 AN F/14/11329 14 October, 1915.

335 AN F/14/11329 Correspondence, 17 June, 1918; 26 June, 1918. “P.G.” = Prisoners of war. This quotation is also noteworthy because it labels American blacks as exotic, and claims they share the low productivity of exotic workers from China and Africa.

336 AN F/12/8008, Comité Consultatif d’action économique, 10th region, January, 1916.

337 AN F/12/8008, Minutes of meeting of the Committee of Economic Action for the 11th Region, 17

Certes la répugnance que nous éprouvons à employer ces prisonniers ennemis, à les recevoir chez nous, à les asseoir à notre table, est bien naturelle et respectable. Il se peut que ce soit le meurtrier du père ou du fils regretté qu'on reçoive ainsi. Mais nous sommes en guerre, et c'est encore faire la guerre d'employer nos ennemis à réparer les maux qu'ils causent."³³⁸

In the Indre-et-Loire a committee reported that it had been difficult to utilise German prisoners because of the "hostilité des cultivatrices". However, this hostility diminished when it was seen how useful they could be.³³⁹ In both these instances the reluctance to utilise Germans is based upon their status as enemies, rather than due to doubts over their utility.

Dockers in Le Havre did complain that they had been made unemployed by excessive use of prisoners of war. Their complaints were dismissed in the authorities' report on the issue, which argued that the number of unemployed was very small, and that as the port was constantly short of workers they had to be considered as voluntarily unemployed. Instead, there were a huge number of demands for more German captives to be allocated.³⁴⁰

There was even the odd example of international working class fraternisation. On the subject of German prisoners working in French mines, a miner called Lebrun claimed "Nos patrons sont plus Boche que les Boches. Et puis les Boches sont des ouvriers comme nous et nos patrons pourraient bien voir un jour Boches et Français se dresser contre eux et remonter au jour en chantant ensemble l'internationale".³⁴¹ There are few recorded examples of this though.

The employment of prisoners didn't imply positive feelings towards the prisoners, when they were unemployed the *Courrier du Centre* reported that public opinion couldn't understand why German prisoners grew fat in laziness while French prisoners were forced to work.³⁴² Their utilisation was very much an expedient born

June, 1916

338 AN F/12/8004, 13 February, 1916

339 AN F/12/8003, Undated, probably from early 1916.

340 AN F/14/11329 14 October, 1915, 27 August, 1915.

341 Max Gallo, "Quelques aspects de la mentalité et du comportement ouvriers dans les usines de guerre - 1914-1918" in *Mouvement Social*. 56 (1966) p. 11.

342 *Courrier du Centre*, 17 June, 1918

out of necessity and the willingness to use German labour did not continue after the war. When the newly created Weimar Republic offered the use of German workers to help rebuild the war torn areas in the North East of France, the French government turned them down. Chanvin, the national secretary of the builders' federation, summed up their objections:

Les camarades allemands ne comprennent-ils donc pas qu'il est impossible pour le moment, en raison des ressentiments manifestés par la population des départements qui ont été martyrisés par la guerre, de faire travailler des ouvriers allemands et français les uns à côté des autres?³⁴³

On occasions, it proved useful to laud certain people of German extraction, which may have led to some nuancing of a universally negative view. For instance, it was noted in an article on French successes in Morocco that the German legionnaires had not deserted despite the promptings of the German army, implying that even Germans could be tamed by French leadership.³⁴⁴ Americans of German origin, while usually considered suspect, were also sometimes described as being right thinking.

Les Américains d'origine allemande, arborent ces maximes 'Nés en Allemagne, mais faits en Amérique, nous ne connaissons qu'une patrie, la patrie américaine. Nous voulons terminer ce que nos ancêtres commencèrent en 1848: nous souhaitons la victoire des Alliés avec la libération Allemande.

[...]

Les Américains d'origine allemande donnèrent ainsi à l'ennemi qui osa les revendiquer comme siens, un écrasant démenti.³⁴⁵

Ferri-Pisani commented that German-Americans were prominent amongst workers making arms for sale to the allies, resistant to propaganda suggesting they down tools.³⁴⁶ It was also reported that German-Americans in the US army had unleashed a torrent of abuse at some German prisoners. One of the insults used focused on their "participation à côté des Prussiens au combat qui se livre contre toutes les peuples honnêtes du monde".³⁴⁷

343 Schor, *L'Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 84.

344 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 1 January, 1918.

345 *La Dépêche*, 6 July, 1918.

346 Ferri-Pisani, *L'Intérêt et l'idéal des États-Unis*, p. 18

347 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 17 June, 1918 German-Americans continued to be regarded with scepticism

The rhetorical device of separating the Prussians, who were beyond redemption, and other parts of Germany which were not necessarily as intrinsically barbarous, was used by Pierre Mille to justify a rejection of American offers to mediate between the warring powers, on the grounds that the Allies sought the elimination of Prussian hegemony in Germany and this couldn't be achieved by mediation.³⁴⁸ Gabriel Séailles made a similar argument against a negotiated peace in 1918 saying that such a peace would be a victory for Prussian militarism, proving her invincible force. It would be enough to “strangle in the German people all spirit of revolt, to justify their pride and their confidence in their masters.”³⁴⁹ The historical consistency of this idea can be illustrated by the argument of Brossolette in his history of the war: “La Prusse [...] n'était pas un peuple, mais une armée. Ses hobereaux, derniers débris de la féodalité européenne, sont des officiers nés. Son roi était avant tout un chef de guerre. [...] Elle a, depuis 1870 surtout, façonné l'Allemagne à son image,”³⁵⁰ Here Brossolette was echoing Mirabeau who had argued “La Prusse, ce n'est pas un peuple qui a une armée; c'est une armée qui a un peuple.” The continuing popularity of Mirabeau's view is also illustrated by the same quote being used by the *Petit Marseillais* in January 1914, before the outbreak of hostilities.³⁵¹ A postcard from 1917 also quoted Mirabeau along similar lines: “La Guerre est l'industrie nationale de la Prusse”³⁵²

The theory of a malign Prussian influence became more common after the war, with the occupation of the Rhineland. Edouard Clunet, musing on marriages between French soldiers and German women in the occupied Rhineland argued that “En ce moment, la Rhénanie est l'objet des prévenances françaises; elle ne les dédaigne pas. Cette province qui n'a été prussienne que par accident, est demeurée fortement imprégnée de culture celtique. Sa conquête, non par le force, mais par le sourire, n'est

though even if it was less than before the US entered the war. For instance, in the 1916 Presidential election, Wilson's victory over Hughes was argued to be a good thing by the *Dépêche* because Hughes was alleged to have gained a disproportionately large amount of the German-American vote. *La Dépêche*, 11 November, 1916.

348 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 2 December, 1916.

349 Gabriel Séailles, *La Paix Blanche*, Paris-Nancy: Berger-Leverault (1918) p. 7.

350 L. Brossolette, *Histoire de la Grande Guerre*, Paris: Armand Colin (1919) pp. 5-6.

351 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 January, 1914.

352 Laurent Gervereau and Christophe Prochasson (eds.), *Images de 1917*, Nanterre: Bibliothèque de

pas irréalisable.”³⁵³ Barrès and others also argued for the separation of the Rhineland from the rest of Germany due to the population’s Celtic origin, Catholic faith and Latin culture. Gabriel Hanotaux argued on 11 November, 1918 that “The populations west of the Rhine, more Celtic than Germanic, must be freed from Prussian tyranny.”³⁵⁴ Plenty of others disagreed though and this subtle distinction was not much used in wartime, with the *Petit Marseillais* dismissing the idea that France might regain the left bank of the Rhine. “Nous ne chercherons pas à les annexer de nouveau. Que ferions-nous de populations gangrenées par un siècle de kultur moderne?”³⁵⁵

Although the Prussians were consistently more demonised than the average German, it was more common to argue, like Gaultier, that the rest of Germany had been willingly led by Prussia.

Que ce vertige d’orgueil et de rapacité qui emporte l’Allemagne et donne à la guerre qu’elle nous fait son particulier cachet d’horreur et de férocité soit dû à l’influence de la Prusse, la chose est indéniable. Il ne faudrait pas, néanmoins, s’imaginer que la réunion des États allemands au royaume de Prusse fasses simplement figure de mariage force. Il y eut, ce me semble, quelque inclination dans leur cas.³⁵⁶

Other writers went further, arguing that it was false to suggest that any Germanic people could have positive characteristics. Dominique Durandy wrote how Bavaria had attracted much admiration in France in peacetime, whilst the French were repelled by the Prussian provinces “de crainte de heurter trop de moustaches hérissées”. The bonhomie of the Bavarians, their sunny outlook on life, their affable manner and their great capacity for gastronomic consumption were all praised by those returning to France. However, the war had shown this picture of the “bons” *Bavarois* to be false. “Nous le voyons, maintenant, en pleine lumière. Ils sont Allemands jusqu’au bout des ongles, ces engloutisseurs de bière ces idolâtres de Parsifal.”³⁵⁷ Nonetheless the possible separation of German and Prussian mentalities

documentation internationale contemporaine (1987) p.21.

353 *Le Temps*, 7 January, 1921.

354 Walter A. McDougall, *France’s Rhineland Diplomacy, 1914-1925; The Last Bid for a Balance of Power in Europe*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press (1978) p. 17, p. 37

355 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 29 March, 1917.

356 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, pp. 24-25.

357 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 1 July, 1915. This can be compared to an article by Jacques Pericard, printed in 1919, which claimed consistent hostility between Bavaria and Prussia. *Le Petit Marseillais*, 11 April, 1919.

was available as a tool when required, affirming again the flexibility of assumed nationalistic characteristics in French racial rhetoric.

While almost all commentators were agreed that the German people were currently entirely reduced to a state of barbaric savagery and loathing of the French, there was some debate as to whether this was the eternal condition of Germany, or whether it was the malign influence of the Prussians, the Hohenzollerns or Pangermanism. For conservatives like Giraud there was a simple answer

Et nous disons bien: l'Allemagne; nous ne disons pas: l'Empereur allemand, ni même le parti pangermanistes. [...] L'Allemagne pensante, l'Allemagne laborieuse, l'Allemagne religieuse, aussi bien que l'Allemagne industrielle, commerciale, politique, financière ou militaire, [...] toute l'Allemagne, en un mot a voulu la guerre. [...] Cette unanimité de la volonté allemande s'explique à son tour par des raisons ethniques et historiques.³⁵⁸

The Hohenzollern dynasty had shown throughout history that they were unscrupulous and warlike, with the single aim of increasing the standing of their house.³⁵⁹ However, Giraud didn't believe that they could have created the monstrous dream of world domination except in a people "dans lequel l'infatuation du succès, l'orgueil endémique, le brutalité innée, la soif des jouissances matérielles ont aboli tout esprit de finesse, et surtout, tout sentiment d'humanité et toute préoccupation morale."³⁶⁰ Octave Aubert made a similar argument in *L'Ouest-Éclair*. It was not sufficient simply to change the leadership in Germany. "Au demeurant, il ne peut dépendre au souverain de changer l'âme de son peuple; c'est lui qui s'adapte à la mentalité de ceux qu'il guide." He went on to argue that "tous les Allemands voulaient la grande guerre de liquidation, tous nous jalousaient, tous nous détestaient [...] Les assassins n'ont pas obéi seulement à des ordres, mais à leur instinct, à leur haine, à leur férocité."³⁶¹

Pangermanism was also regularly singled out for blame. Octave Uzanne argued that the Germans were under the spell of Pangermanism, which had been growing in influence since the mid-nineteenth century. Nevertheless, he did not neglect to

358 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 2.

359 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 3.

360 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 17.

mention they were descendants of the “Cimbres” and the Teutons.³⁶² The other historical inheritance the Germans were held to be subject to was the Huns. “Que les Allemands aient une mentalité de barbares et que leur kultur ressemble à celle des Huns, que le Kaiser rappelle Attila, nul ne le conteste plus depuis longtemps.”³⁶³ For Gaultier, pangermanism was a religion, which explained the “incendies d’églises, des bombardements de cathédrales, des assassinats d’ecclésiastiques et des tortures infligées à des prêtres, des viols de religieuses et des sacrilèges de toutes catégories” committed by the Germans during the war.³⁶⁴ The activities of the troops of the Habsburg empire were usually ignored in the French press, but when they were alleged to have committed atrocities, then they too could be put under the banner of “Barbarie Teutonne”.³⁶⁵

If the influences of pangermanism, Prussia and the Hohenzollerns had all led to a decline in the moral state of the German population, the general current of opinion towards Germany suggested that they were only the modern manifestation of an eternal desire to vanquish the French. Karl Marx’s internationalism, according to Mauclair’s critique in *La Dépêche*, was “la prépondérance du travailleur allemand sur tous les autres, une conquête économique parallèle à la conquête militaire.” Marxism was the sociological form of armed pangermanism. “Il a été, dans toute la force du terme, un Allemand, c’est-à-dire un concentrateur d’exécration séculaire contre notre race.”³⁶⁶ Haraucourt in the same newspaper claimed that even defeat in the war had not extinguished this eternal ambition.

Tout comme au temps de Jules César, la caractéristique de l’âme allemande est double, brutalité et perfidie. Aussi longtemps que l’Allemagne a pu croire au succès, elle fut *unanime* à vouloir nous anéantir; aujourd’hui, même dans la discorde et malgré la guerre civile, l’Allemagne vaincue reste *unanime* à vouloir nous rouler.³⁶⁷

361 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 1 September, 1916.

362 *La Dépêche*, 5 April, 1918.

363 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 25 March, 1918.

364 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, pp. 65-66.

365 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 9 July, 1916.

366 *La Dépêche*, 18 May, 1918.

367 *La Dépêche*, 18 January, 1919 (emphasis in the original).

Both Gaultier and Bérillon made repeated reference to the heinous conduct of the Germanic tribes that had plunged Europe into the dark ages. For them such behaviour was an inescapable part of the German mentality. “Il convient, en effet, de ne pas oublier tout ce que l’antique Teuton, ancêtre de nos modernes ennemis, représente d’orgueil féroces.”³⁶⁸ Gaultier ultimately concluded “Il (Germany) est barbare et il est, au fond de lui, naturellement cruel.” Moreover

Il n’est pas un seul Allemand qui ne soit convaincu, de nos jours, qu’entre lui et le reste du genre humain existe le même abîme qu’entre le surhomme que Nietzsche appelait de ses vœux et l’homme vulgaire.³⁶⁹

An article in the *Petit Marseillais* quoted Lord Broughton on the cruelty displayed by Blücher’s officers in 1815, as proof that “cruauté, esprit du mal, absence de tout sentiment de générosité sont dans la nature même du Prussien.”³⁷⁰

La Dépêche believed that “Dans l’Europe de demain, il restera, planant sur nous, une haine et une menace qui durent depuis la mort de Charlemagne, et qui n’abdiqueront point;”³⁷¹ As Emile Bergerat summed it up, “La question boche n’est pas une question sociale, c’est un problème ethnique [...] L’Allemand d’hier est celui de demain.”³⁷²

The idea that the German willingness to war could only be ascribed to an unconscious, innate desire to crush the French on the way to world domination was nearly universal. Brossolette in seeking to explain the German desire for war as an attempt to gain extra land and resources, in order to enrich themselves, was an almost unique attempt to offer a rational explanation.³⁷³ Instead, arguments were made such as the theory of Jacques Rivière and Pierre Mille that “L’Allemand n’a d’abord ni desirs ni rêves, ni amour ni haine, ni plaisir ni dégoût, ni passions d’aucune sorte. Au point de vue de la sensibilité, il est *nul*.”³⁷⁴ Furthermore

368 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, p. 5, Bérillon, *Les Caractères Nationaux*, pp. 32-33.

369 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, p. 117, p. 45.

370 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 15 September, 1915.

371 *La Dépêche*, 16 July, 1918.

372 *La Dépêche*, 8 July, 1919.

373 Brossolette, *Histoire de la Grande Guerre*, pp. 1-4.

374 *La Dépêche*, 30 January, 1919 (emphasis in the original).

L'Allemand distingue difficilement entre les catégories du beau et du laid, du bien et du mal, du vrai et de faux. Il sait qu'elles existent, mais il ne les *sent* pas. Et alors il est porté à ne les connaître que sous la catégorie du 'possible'. Ce qui est possible est bien, ce qui est impossible est mal.”³⁷⁵

When asked to describe the contribution of black troops to France during the First World War, Colonel Edouard Réquin used as an example a cartoon that had appeared in *L'Illustration* representing a Senegalese soldier guarding some German prisoners. The soldier said with a smile to a visitor who approached to see the prisoners: “I suppose you have come to see the savages, is it not so?”³⁷⁶ A variation on this theme was a story in the *Petit Marseillais* which was entitled “Pioupiou français et Officier allemand”. It told of a small soldier who was guarding some highly ranked German officers. He said to one of them “Tu sais, mon vieux, à Berlin, tu peux faire ce que tu veux; mais, ici, c'est *moi* le maître, et je te défends de mettre les pieds sur la banquette.”³⁷⁷ Just as the Germans are diminished by being subject to a small Frenchman, being under the control of nominally inferior races has a similar effect.

The idea that the war demonstrated to the French that the heroic soldiers from their African colonies were not savages, at least not compared to the barbaric Germans, is one that was commonly articulated during the war, although it faded with the withdrawal of both colonial and German troops from French soil. Réquin argued that the French had delivered Africans from barbarism and given them civilization and justice; it was their duty in turn to defend that justice and civilization against Prussian barbarism.³⁷⁸ In *La Dépêche*, news from Germany was regularly headlined “Au Pays des Barbares”.³⁷⁹ However, a closer examination of usage of terms like “savages” and “barbarians” shows the different ways in which they were applied to Africans and Germans, and the way that pre-war assumptions were maintained throughout the conflict.

³⁷⁵ *La Dépêche*, 30 January, 1919 (emphasis in the original).

³⁷⁶ Scott: *Scott's official history of the American negro in the world war*. The *Illustration* image inspired a similar postcard with the subtitle “Ti viens voir sauvages”. Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, appendix. The black soldier himself looks smart and amiable with no traces of savagery, the Germans in the background look subdued rather than ferocious. This illustrates the need for flexibility in the discourse on savagery, where the postcard sought both to condemn the Germans as savage, but simultaneously to reassure the public that neither German prisoners nor colonial soldiers represented a threat.

³⁷⁷ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 24 September, 1914.

³⁷⁸ Scott: *Scott's official history of the American negro in the world war*.

When the Germans were accused of savagery, the French generally were referring to what was perceived to be breaches of the ethics of modern civilisation. Primarily it referred to the rapes and infanticides that were believed to be rife in occupied France, but it also extended to issues like the shelling of churches and cathedrals and the use of poison gas. “Pauvre Nancy! La sauvagerie teutonnes s’acharne sur elle...” wrote Kahn.³⁸⁰ M. Pimpernelle, mayor of the commune of Longueville, lambasted the Germans as “véritables barbares” who had utilised every possible way to destroy the French, not just heavy artillery, incendiary bombs, poison gas and so on but also “ils ajoutaient encore çà et là des procédés sauvages destinés à terroriser ceux que leurs coups ne tuaient pas.”³⁸¹ Théodore Botrel’s song *En passant par ton Berlin* promised that the French would invade Germany as France had been invaded, but that in this case the French would not bombard German churches or slaughter their elderly and their children.³⁸² The *Dépêche* described the Germans as “barbares” for attempting to bomb the church of Saint-Apollinaire-Nova in Ravenna.³⁸³ In Puyperoux’s account of the war, the section entitled *Les Barbares* described the damage done to Reims by the German army. He also attacked the Germans for their use of gas, describing them as a barbarous people, without pity, heart, loyalty or scruples.³⁸⁴ Even in a book which was devoted to France’s munitions factories, Maxime Vuillaume still managed to rail against “ces laches adversaires, qui ont inventé l’arme odieuse de l’empoisonnement”.³⁸⁵

The German invaders were also consistently considered barbaric for the threat they posed to French women and children. The women were threatened by the consistent fears of seduction or rape by soldiers, with the consequent risk of illegitimate German babies but also through the demeaning way in which the invaders treated French

379 *La Dépêche*, 11 January, 1916.

380 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, p. 211.

381 *Fête d’inauguration du monument commémoratif de Longueville-sur-Aube*. Troyes: Imprimerie Paul Bage (1922) p. 9

382 Nicole Lacombe and Alain Lacombe, *Les Chants de Bataille: La chanson patriotique de 1900 à 1918*. Paris: Pierre Belfond (1992) pp. 217-218.

383 *La Dépêche*, 15 February, 1916.

384 Puyperoux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* pp. 196-197, p. 161.

385 Maxime Vuillaume, *Dans les Usines de la Guerre*, Paris: Rouff (1917) p. 31

women.³⁸⁶ One of the outrages alleged to have been perpetrated by the Germans was “le cas des femmes et des jeunes filles de la région du Nord soumises à la ‘visite’ médicale ainsi que des prostituées”.³⁸⁷ Ruth Harris’s study of the debate over what to do with the women who became pregnant as a result of being raped by German soldiers is particularly illustrative of the impact that a discourse that predicated certain characteristics as being inherent in Germanic blood, and the potential corruption of the Celtic-Latin French race by it.³⁸⁸ For some, the only way to preserve French blood from the degeneration implicit in children growing up in France from German paternity was to abort them, in the words of *Le Matin* to exterminate “without scruple, the ignoble and criminal chaff which would one day dishonour the pure wheat of our plains on which blows the wind of liberty”. The products of such unions would be “half-monsters” who could pass on the “virus” of their ancestry into French society. The way in which “science” could be used to back up prejudice was demonstrated again by Dr Tissier, who argued that being impregnated by a German wouldn’t just contaminate the baby that resulted, but all future children borne by that woman.³⁸⁹ Those who argued for the preservation of the babies emphasised the maternal role, which they believed outweighed the genetic deficiencies resulting from German fatherhood. By their nurture and devotion, French mothers could rescue these children and produce future French citizens. Others sought to use these children for retribution. What better revenge to exact upon the cruel barbarians than for the fruit of the outrages to grow up to be a proud citizen of their enemy.

The government solution was to allow the women to come to Paris either to give birth or just afterwards, whereupon the babies would be given a false birth certificate and placed under the care of the state. The women would need a statement from a local magistrate testifying to the otherwise impeccable sexual respectability. As Harris argues, this course reflected a triumph of social norms over racial ones. The removal of the bastard child from the family spared it dishonour and the costs of raising the

386 For these debates see especially: Harris, “The ‘Child of the Barbarian’”, Judith Wishnia, “Natalisme et nationalisme pendant la première guerre mondiale” in *Vingtième Siècle* 45 (1995) pp. 30-39, Jean-Yves LeNaour, “Femmes tondues et répression des ‘femmes à boches’ en 1918” in *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 47-1, January-March 2000 pp. 149-158.

387 *La Dépêche*, 30 January, 1919.

388 Harris, “The ‘Child of the Barbarian’”, p. 195

389 Harris, “The ‘Child of the Barbarian’”, pp. 195-196.

child and its share of inheritance, while leaving the illegitimate child tainted with its German blood but unreformed by maternal care to contribute to France's degeneration.³⁹⁰

The mutilation of children, to prevent retaliation when they grew older was also argued to be common. This filtered in to a discourse that emphasised the planned, ordered, callousness of outrages; that these were not random acts of brutality but a systematic tactic. A similar, though less grisly theme in this discourse was the repeated reference to the Germans chopping down fruit trees, the implication again being that while most armies may inflict cruelty for short term military gain, the Germans were unique in their systematic ruthlessness. Harris notes that as well as the rapes and mutilations, another common outrage it was alleged was prevalent amongst the Germans was the pillage of rings, particularly wedding rings. Again this symbolised cruelty and depravity of the German soldiers, but additionally it served to damn the complicity of their womenfolk (who were said to be behind the practice), and the damage that materialism had wrought upon German society.³⁹¹

For all this brutality, the idea that the German people needed to be educated up to the French level of civilization, a common theme where the colonies was concerned, was absent. Their barbarism was demonstrated by their use of modern technology in the services of this brutality. Paul Cambon wrote to his brother in February 1918 about the bombing of Paris that to "massacrer des femmes, des enfants, et des habitants paisibles d'une hauteur de 3,000 mètres c'est un progrès dans l'abomination dont seuls des Boches étaient capables."³⁹² Similarly, Charles Andler argued

Ce qui fait la scandale du monde, c'est que ce soit un peuple si haut placé dans civilisation, qui ait la responsabilité de la présente guerre, et d'une poursuite par les méthodes d'atrocité scientifique et préméditée que nous y voyons appliquées.³⁹³

390 Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian', p. 199.

391 Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian'", pp. 184-6.

392 Paul Cambon, *Correspondance 1870-1924*, vol.3, Paris: Grasset (1946) p. 220.

393 Charles Andler, *Ce Qui Devra Changer en Allemagne*, 2nd edition. Paris: Editions de Foi et Vie (1918) p. 2.

When Paul Gaultier spoke of the German's "barbarie scientifique", he saw science purely at the service of barbarism.³⁹⁴ A former colonial soldier, Broussard, writing to a contributor of *La Dépêche Coloniale*, made the point explicitly when he compared the war with colonial battles.

Cette fois, c'est autre chose. Ce sont bien encore des sauvages que nous avons devant nous, mais des sauvages contre nature: les nègres sur qui j'ai fait le coup de feu autrefois n'étaient que des primitifs, les germains qui nous attaquent maintenant sont des barbares, ce qui est bien différent.³⁹⁵

While the description of the Germans as barbarians was usually in reference to some horror they had committed (or were alleged to have committed) during the war, the concept of the Germans as barbarians was one that was easily accessible to the French in 1914, not one that only developed over the course of the war. In the *Petit Marseillais* L. Faber wrote as early as the 5th of August 1914 of "les barbares allemands" while the next day an article describing German surprise at the strength of French resistance was headlined: "L'Etonnement des Barbares". Explanation of who the barbarians might be was evidently superfluous.³⁹⁶ On 8 August, Henri Bergson declared that the war against Germany was the struggle between civilisation against barbarism as "la brutalité et le cynicisme de l'Allemagne, dans son mépris de toute justice et de toute vérité, une régression à l'état sauvage."³⁹⁷ Ruth Harris has argued that the experience of occupation in 1870-1, particularly in the Eastern Provinces meant that the Germans had "already been portrayed as brigands, looters and rapists even before the conflict of 1914 began."³⁹⁸ The continuity in antipathy dating from the Franco-Prussian war is also illustrated by Antoine Court's analysis of Emile Zola's writings. In 1872, Zola disparaged a book collecting songs sung by German troops in the Franco-Prussian war as "côté naïf et rude, exquis parfois dans la grossièreté".³⁹⁹ Zola's continued rancour was exhibited twenty years on in *La Débâcle*, and in 1892, Zola responded to a letter written to *Le Figaro* by a Bavarian

394 Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, avant-propos, p.105. This was a common theme in the newspapers as well, for instance: *Le Petit Marseillais*, 4 October, 1914.

395 *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 9 September, 1914.

396 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 5 August, 1914, 6 August, 1914.

397 Lacombe and Lacombe, *Les Chants de Bataille*, p. 163.

398 Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian'" p. 180.

399 quoted in Antoine Court, "Zola et l'Allemagne" in Stéphane Michaud (ed.) *L'impossible semblable: Regards sur trois siècles de relations littéraires franco-allemandes*. Paris: Sedes (1991) p. 99.

criticising the book as “un plaidoyer brutal pour la dangereuse illusion des beautés de la guerre, une hypocrite constatation du triomphe des races germaniques sur les races latines”.⁴⁰⁰ Zola didn’t believe he was alone in his hostility to Germany and, in 1899, pondered on why there hadn’t been war for thirty years between France and Germany, “malgré la haine qui est restée longtemps si vive entre la France et Allemagne”. He concluded this represented a rejection of war itself.⁴⁰¹

The French belief seemed to be that the Germans, while nominally a civilised European nation, would always be betrayed by a brutal, militaristic streak, a characteristic displayed in the past by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. This was not to say that German civilisation was normally equally to that of France. Instead, a distinction was frequently drawn between German “Kultur” which may have approximated civilisation but lacked some of the essential components. Giraud argued that in choosing between France and Germany, Spain had to choose between Germanic “culture” and Latin civilisation.⁴⁰² The *Petit Marseillais* claimed that German atrocities should not be seen as acts of a Franco-German war, but “des faits de guerre ‘kulturo-civilisée’.”⁴⁰³ Gautier believed that German civilisation was “toute matérielle”.

When used to describe Germans, the word savage was always entirely pejorative. Used to describe black Africans this was not always the case. Alfred Guignard, a French soldier who served in West Africa described going into battle with black troops: “My strapping lads ran, despite my best efforts, quicker than me, large white grins on their black faces, shouting at the top of their voices war cries that were savage and comic. Oh, that of Sergeant Bilali.”⁴⁰⁴ Before the war, General Henri Bonnal spoke enthusiastically of black troops and “their savage impetuosity in attacks with the bayonet.”⁴⁰⁵

400 quoted in Court, “Zola et l’Allemagne” pp. 91-92. Notice again the emphasis on the racial difference between Germanic and Latin peoples.

401 quoted in Court, “Zola et l’Allemagne” p. 103.

402 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 25.

403 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 15 January, 1916.

404 Guignard, *Troupes noires*, p. 170.

405 Lunn, “Les Races Guerrières” p. 525.

When Germans and black Africans interacted, the distinctions were made clearer. In the caricature mentioned in the introduction, where the German prisoner who fears being eaten is reassured by a black soldier, who tells him “Don’t worry. Li savage, but Li does not eat unclean things” the message is obvious, Africans are good hearted but savage, Germans are cultured but barbaric.⁴⁰⁶ The French view of their colonial troops was essentially benevolent; they saw the soldiers as good hearted and loyal. Nevertheless, this view was underpinned by a belief that they were still savage, that they still lacked many of the essentials of civilised life. When they were referred to as savage it implied backwardness. When Germans were called savage it implied cruelty and callousness as intrinsic to the German race, but it did not carry the same overtones of backwardness.

One newspaper description of colonial troops illustrates the complexity of these descriptions. “Il les montra farouches défenseurs d’Ypres, d’Arras, de Senlis, de Reims, nos glorieuses cités d’art mutilées par les Allemands, par ces mêmes Allemands qui osent encore les qualifier de sauvages.”⁴⁰⁷ The colonial troops are “ferocious”, a word very rarely used to describe French troops, who would more typically be described as heroic. What shows them as above the Germans is that they are defending civilisation as incarnated by the historical cities of France, while the Germans display their barbarism by attacking them. In this context, civilisation is conferred upon the colonial troops not by their actions or their character, but by their cause.

Moreover, this relatively benign assessment of non-white people only applied in cases where the Germans were compared directly to French colonial troops. In other comparisons between Germans and non-Europeans, other races were used primarily as convenient shorthand for illustrating how low the Germans had sunk. For Giraud, “Moralement, elle est descendue au-dessous des peuplades nègres de l’Afrique centrale”.⁴⁰⁸ Pierre Mille quoted approvingly the argument by Jacques Rivière that the Germans are not cruel by nature “comme chez les Indiens de l’Amérique du Nord, par

406 Pedroncini, “Allocution introductive” p. 19.

407 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 3 April, 1916.

408 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 747.

exemple, qui sont naturellement cruels.”⁴⁰⁹ The *Dépêche* also dismissed German criticism of Britain bringing Japan into the war, for had not Germany allied with “le Turc dégénéré”.⁴¹⁰ So morally bankrupt were the Germans though, that even the degenerate Turks were sometimes shocked. An account told how Germans in Syria had exhumed the bodies of French soldiers buried in a cemetery, and how this had angered even the Turks.⁴¹¹

Susan Grayzel notes the argument by Jean Finot in favour of the right of French women to have abortions in instances where they had been the victims of rape by German troops. To justify this, Finot described how a European woman had been captured, raped and impregnated by gorillas in Central Africa. Naturally, she had not borne the monstrous child of these animals, and Finot argued that women in Northern France should be no more compelled to bear the children of the bestial Germans. As Grayzel rightly points out, this account not only brings Germans down to the level of animals but implicitly to that of colonial men as well.⁴¹² In the *Chronique Medicale* in 1915, a physician made the argument explicit, comparing French women raped by Germans with white women and black men in the United States. He added that “any white woman, raped and made pregnant by a Negro, can have herself aborted with impunity.” French women should be granted the same privilege.⁴¹³

In Albert Londres’ war reportage in the *Petit Journal* in 1917, he expressed his indignation towards German conduct in revealing language. “on perçoit que le plan de l’Allemagne n’était pas seulement de nous battre, qu’il était de nous assujettir. [...] Ils traiteraient la France comme la Cameroun.”⁴¹⁴ While it was acceptable for Africans to be colonised, it was an outrage that anyone should seek to attempt it in France. A speaker in a conference about tourism in France also raised the spectre of France being a mere colony of her neighbour when he spoke of German domination of the hotel industry, and said that it was a form of colonisation, and that it was an awful

409 *La Dépêche*, 30 January, 1919, Whether the Germans were indeed cruel by their very nature was not universally agreed. Gaultier argued that they were: “Il est barbare et il est, au fond de lui, naturellement cruel.” Gaultier, *La Mentalité Allemande*, p. 17.

410 *La Dépêche*, 18 January, 1916.

411 *La Dépêche*, 5 January, 1916.

412 Grayzel, *Woman’s Identities at War*, pp. 58-59.

413 quoted in Harris “The ‘Child of the Barbarian’” p. 195

prospect to imagine being colonised by the Boche.⁴¹⁵ Paul Forsans, President of the l'Union des Intérêts Economiques, seemed to see immigrants from other races as little better than the German invaders: “Après avoir libéré notre sol de la souillure teutonne, allons-nous compter surtout sur la main d’œuvre noire ou jaune pour cultiver nos champs?”⁴¹⁶

Allied Nations

The allied soldiers who were fighting with the French, on French soil, naturally received a good press, regularly having their attitude and their actions praised. If they were not believed to be quite as heroic as the French soldiers, they were almost there. However, while the Allied armies were very rarely criticised by French newspapers for any failings, they didn't receive anything near the adulation accorded to the French troops. This was reflected in a postwar discourse that granted the allied armies only a minor part in the glory of victory. This discourse is exemplified by the speech of M. Pegon, the mayor of Artaix at the inauguration of its monument to the war dead. “Les nations alliées, il est vrai, nous ont apporté leur concours” he acknowledged, but it was the French who, in November 1917 “arrêtèrent le désastreux recul des armées italiennes et leur permirent de reprendre l’offensive”. It was the French also who, at critical moments, “encadrait les Anglais dans leur attaques et empêchait leur retraite trop facile”. M. Damiron, the treasurer for the monument made a similar point “Les Anglais ont pu fléchir, les Italiens céder à la panique, le Poilu de France n’a jamais reculé.”⁴¹⁷ These comments are also significant as they suggest that by 1922 the contribution of France's allies was beginning to be seen as roughly equivalent, whereas during the war the British contribution was valued much higher than that of the Italians.

Some areas of concern arose regularly. The British, and particularly the American, soldiers were much better paid than the French, which led to considerable

414 Albert Londres, *Contre le bourrage de crâne*. Paris: Arléa (1998) p. 10.

415 AN F/12/8009, October 1917

416 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 14 June, 1917.

resentment.⁴¹⁸ Not only did the greater wealth of these soldiers create feelings of jealousy, they also pushed up prices in areas where the allied troops were stationed. Perhaps most seriously of all, the French resented it when this wealth was used to impress or seduce local women. These issues were largely kept in check as long as the French believed that their allies were doing their duty at the front, but when this was not believed to be the case, then criticism could be severe.

For those who did not believe in the war, it was easier to reveal prejudice towards the Allied countries. One pacifist pamphlet decried France's allies thus:

A bas l'Amérique qui veut nous aider parcequ'elle craint des milliards engagés et non par désintéressement comme elle le dit [...] A bas l'Angleterre notre ennemie héréditaire qui a voulu et fait la guerre parcequ'elle craignait pour elle même la puissance de l'Allemagne et qu'elle veut être seule à dominer le monde!⁴¹⁹

The criticisms here of perfidious Albion, determined to manipulate the continental balance of power to preserve her own hegemony and a money oriented United States are ones that had a long history in France. While the vast majority of the populace did support the war, and thus welcomed the support of the Allies, it is likely that many of them retained some of the suspicion towards the allied nations expressed here.

The regard that allied nations were held in was closely linked to the contribution that the nation was believed to be making towards the war. Just as with the colonial soldiers, the French could forgive a great deal if they thought that foreigners were helping them win the war. Craig Gibson mentions one letter picked up by the French censors from September 1918, when the Allied offensive was making real gains, that praised the Australians as good men "even if they plundered my property".⁴²⁰ The Italian contribution was never particularly highly regarded, and Italian soldiers were widely referred to as *Maquaroons* (macaronis).⁴²¹ After the Italian army was routed in

417 *Cérémonie d'inauguration du monument élevé à la gloire des soldats d'Artaix morts pour la France pendant la Grande Guerre (1914-1918)* Lyon: Rey (1922) p. 9

418 David Englander, "The French Soldier. 1914-18" in *French History* 1-1 (1987) pp. 57-58.

419 AN F/7/12986/1, July, 1917.

420 Craig Gibson, "Through French Eyes: the British Expeditionary Force and the Records of the French Postal Censor, 1916-1918 in *History Workshop Journal* 55 (2003) p. 186.

421 Lovie, *Poilus Savoyards* p.86, p.142, Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 76.

the battle of Caporetto, the Italians were much disdained for their perceived military incompetence, and compared adversely to more capable allies such as the English: “Tout de même, si les Boches battent les Italiens, depuis Verdun ils ne frottent plus aux Français ni aux Anglais.”⁴²² Analysing the mood amongst workers in Lyon in 1918, Merrheim claimed that public opinion was a little hostile to Italian workers there “en raison de leur revers”. He asserted that popular belief was that, having failed to fight effectively themselves, Italian soldiers were coming to Lyon to send Frenchmen to the front instead. Merrheim tried to counter this hostility by contending that this real reason for the Italians presence was that they were coming to replace materiel that their army had lost and thus they continued to contribute to France’s cause.⁴²³

The English were generally well regarded, their troops in particular. For the soldier, Raymond Franco, “Les Anglais sont charmants. A leur égard, nous avons été tout ce qu’il y a de plus aimables, et je suis sûr qu’ils garderont de nous, un très bon souvenir.”⁴²⁴ Maugars commended the “phlegmatic“ English troops.⁴²⁵ However, the French had long memories of rivalry with her neighbours from over *La Manche* from the Hundred Years War to Fashoda and this led to them consistently questioning whether their new found allies were fully committed to the conflict. British resistance to accepting a single Allied command under a French commander was a source of despair, and the belief that the British were willing to fight to the last Frenchman was a popular one, particularly before the introduction of conscription and the resultant increase in size of the British army in France.⁴²⁶ In March 1916, *L’Ouest-Éclair* had to defend the English against accusations that they had not provided a fair share of troops.⁴²⁷ On 20 December 1914, André Kahn even celebrated the German bombing of England because he doubted British commitment.

J’ai entendu raconter par le colonel que les Boches avaient bombardé plusieurs villes anglaises depuis la côte. Bravo! Cela va donner à réfléchir à Messieurs les Alliés. Sans doute mettront-ils plus d’entrain

422 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, pp. 76-79.

423 AN F/7/13365, 13 January, 1918.

424 Franco, “Exposé Journalier de ma Vie Militaire”, p. 234.

425 Maugars, *Avec La Marocaine*, p. 15.

426 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, pp. 84-86.

427 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 30 March, 1916.

à nous envoyer de renfort et à en finir une bonne fois en jetant en Belgique le million d'hommes qu'ils nous promettent depuis si longtemps et que nous ne voyons jamais venir.⁴²⁸

In Giraud's history of the war, he opined that it was only with conscription in May 1916 that England finally fully entered the war.⁴²⁹ If hostility towards the actions of the British government and generals usually exempted the soldiers, the reverses suffered by the English near Amiens in the spring of 1918, and the need for the French to rescue them, led to renewed criticism. Interestingly, the Australian, Canadian, and other troops from the British colonies were generally spared this criticism.⁴³⁰ While in general the English contribution was considered to outweigh the defects of the English character, it did not eliminate them, as Giraud made explicit. "Ses lenteurs dans la pensée et dans l'action, ses méprises, son individualisme ombrageux et souvent excessif, elle a tout compensé, tout racheté, et au delà, par la loyauté, la générosité, l'énormité et la continuité de son effort."⁴³¹ In general, however, the French and British kept their distance, both physically and emotionally and, as Bell argues, the French and British soldiers rarely talked of the other in diaries, letters and memoirs.⁴³² When the English nature was examined, their lack of outward emotion was emphasised. John Charpentier argued that what distinguished the English from the French was that "Les Anglais doivent peu à la sensation; nous lui devons presque tout", while English home life was more formal, more reserved than its French equivalent.⁴³³ This was consistent with a pre-war French idea of Britain based around an image of the undemonstrative, proper English gentleman incarnated in characters like Phileas Fogg.

The British army also featured non-white soldiers from the British empire, these were regarded in a very similar manner as French colonial troops. They were popularly depicted as a terrifying threat to the Germans, for instance a postcard photo of a British Indian with a knife between his teeth was accompanied by the caption: "Les

428 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 77.

429 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 262.

430 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, pp. 363-366.

431 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 260.

432 P.M.H. Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940: Entente and Estrangement*. New York: Longman (1996) pp. 96-97.

433 Charpentier, *Notre Nouvelle Amie L'Angleterre* p. 4, p. 184.

Hindous en France – Soldat et son terrible kukri (couteau de guerre)”⁴³⁴ One report lamented “this is beyond imagination; the English do not want to give us rooms in our own homes. No one in the area is master in his own home; everyone is more than unhappy. There are Indian troops; we do not feel safe or secure anymore...”⁴³⁵ There is a notable difference in the nature of the complaint, the English are disliked because they are taking over the area and showing a lack of respect for the French, while the Indians are considered a physical threat – and the writer felt no need to offer any further explanation of that, simply that they were Indians signified a threat.

The real vitriol was reserved for the Russians, after their withdrawal from the war. In 1916, *L'Eclair du Midi* described a wildly enthusiastic reception for Russian troops arriving in Marseille.⁴³⁶ After the peace of Brest-Litvosk though, this was forgotten. According to the soldier, Jean, “La défection de la Russie produit la haine contre cette puissance.” The soldiers were unanimous: ‘Les Russes sont des cochons’.⁴³⁷ The most common term to describe the Russian action was *lâchage* – desertion, while the Russian people themselves were lambasted as “un ramassis d’ignorants et d’alcooliques, ceux qui sont intelligentes sont des fripouilles”.⁴³⁸ Russia was dismissed by Giraud as immense, ignorant and mystical, with a credulous peasantry.⁴³⁹ The *Ouest-Éclair* explained the triumph of the Bolsheviks as a result of “toutes les aberrations d’un mysticisme sans règle et d’une inexpérience politique totale” made by a “peuple d’illettrés, très inférieur, dans l’ensemble, à ce qu’était notre France du Moyen-Age”.⁴⁴⁰ According to *La Dépêche*, the “moujiks” that made up eighty percent of the country were an inert mass “sans idée, sans initiative”.⁴⁴¹ That this was considered an innate Slavic trait was illustrated by the paper’s praise for Boris Savinkoff, a former war minister in the Kerenski government. “Savinkoff n’est pas le Slave indécis, un discoureur abondant et nébuleux, il est un homme d’action

434 François Pairault, *Images de poilus, la grande guerre en cartes postales*, Paris: Éd. France loisirs, (2003) p. 45.

435 Gibson, “Through French Eyes” p. 183.

436 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 22 April, 1916.

437 Jean, *Dans les tranchées: lettres du front 1917-1918*, Paris: Éditions Complexe, (1998) p. 74.

438 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 73, pp. 74-5.

439 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 457, p. 458.

440 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 28 February, 1918.

441 *La Dépêche*, 16 January, 1919.

d'une intelligence lucide, d'une rare énergie."⁴⁴² The themes of irrationality and inertia that run through these descriptions are very characteristic of the discourse of backwardness used by the French to describe non-European races, and Russia was never seen as having been a full member of European civilisation.

The invective that was aimed at the Russians after they left the war was exacerbated by the fact that they had never been held in particularly high esteem, where the same criticisms of backwardness recurred. J. de Morgan writing in *L'Eclair du Midi*, argued in May 1917 that they were "des grands enfants, qu'on conduit avec une bonne parole, dévoués, polis, respectueux."⁴⁴³ He repeated this in his article of 1st June, 1917, arguing that Russian people were guided by their instinct and that "Le russe est un grand enfant. [...] il est parfaitement incapable d'être le maître de lui-même."⁴⁴⁴ Before the war, the *Petit Marseillais* noted that Russia had only joined the current of that civilisation in the eighteenth century and was thus still trying to catch up with Western European civilisation. "En ce qui concerne la formation du caractère, l'aptitude à apprendre, à gérer le savoir acquis, la Russie est naturellement en retard sur nous autres, vieux Européens de l'Ouest."⁴⁴⁵ Henri Focillon in 1916 wondered if Russia was still in its "période médiévale" and claimed that it was still uncertain in its utilisation of the administrative and industrial techniques of the West. Focillon went on to compare the "fatalisme animal de l'Orient" with the attitude of the Russians for whom death is "une vérité éternelle qui achève de s'épanouir."⁴⁴⁶

The alliance may have prompted André Kahn to find previously hidden virtues in Tolstoy: "J'ai terminé les 'souvenirs' de Tolstoï. Je ne sais pas si c'est par reconnaissance pour nos alliés, mais Tolstoï que je détestais m'est devenu sympathique". Nevertheless, he still did not rate the Russians as soldiers; they lacked endurance and courage, and so he was unsurprised at setbacks for the Russian army in February 1915.

442 *La Dépêche*, 16 January, 1919.

443 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 5 May, 1917.

444 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 1 June, 1917.

445 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 7 March, 1914.

446 Henri Focillon, *L'Ame Russe*, Conférence faite à l'université de Lyon (1916) p. 4, pp. 26-27.

[L]es Russes sont des mauvais soldats. Ils ont le nombre, mais le nombre n'est pas suffisant dans la guerre actuelle. Il faut aussi l'endurance et le courage. [...] Aux Russes nous ne devons être reconnaissants que de n'avoir pas été écrasés nous-mêmes dès les premiers jours de guerre. C'est déjà quelque chose mais ce n'est pas tout.⁴⁴⁷

Camille Mauclair noted that "l'opinion soit encline à maudire la Russie" even in September 1917, before the peace treaty.⁴⁴⁸ Even when their conduct was praised, it was ascribed to instinctive behaviour rather than conscious choice. Spont contrasted the French attitude to children: mitigated by fear of the financial costs, to that of the Russians, who "envisagent sans effroi les charges qui en résulteront. Ils considèrent les enfants comme la suprême, l'unique récompense en ce monde."⁴⁴⁹

La Dépêche suggested another problem with the Russian character, that it was prone to insanity. "Le caractère russe se prête à toute sorte d'excès et à des défaillances brusques; la solide armature psychologique des races occidentales lui fait défaut."⁴⁵⁰ The *Dépêche* is explicit here in offering a racial basis to this difference between Russia and the West, not one simply resulting from the late development of civilisation in Russia. Both the literature and history of Russia was said to testify to the propensity to madness and impulsiveness amongst the population while their exoticism was illustrated by the occasional reports of "amazones" serving in the Russian army.⁴⁵¹ The exploits of these women were recounted in a positive fashion, but there was no suggestion that French women should do the same. Marthe Dupuy described the heroism shown by Russian women fighters, arguing: "De tels exemples de courage et de dévouement [...] n'en demeurent pas moins des actes dignes d'admiration qu'il serait coupable de taire sous prétexte que ce serait folie de les imiter."⁴⁵² While British and American women were largely expected to show similar traits of behaviour to their French counterparts, the same was not true for Russian women.

447 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 109.

448 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d'un Juif Patriote*, p. 39, *La Dépêche*, 12 September, 1917.

449 Henry Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, Paris: Perrin et Cie, (1916) p. 55, pp. 55-56.

450 *La Dépêche*, 20 November, 1917.

451 e.g. *La Petite Gironde*, 6 October, 1919.

452 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 16 January, 1916.

The United States

Apart from Germany, by far the most important nation in French discourse was the United States. Before it entered the war, reams of newsprint were devoted to analysing what its intentions were. Once it had, American soldiers generated far more interest than any of the other Allied armies.

Generally, the press sought to portray the United States favourably before its entry into the war, not wishing to antagonise it. However frustration at the inability of the Wilson government to see that the only reasonable position for the Americans to take would be to enter the war on France's side led to increasing criticism. André Suarès writing in *L'Opinion* in July 1915 argued that "On peut trouver son compte à être neutre: il n'y a pas lieu d'en être fier [...] Les neutres sont malades plus qu'ils ne pensent [...] Tout ce qui est nation doit être avec la France." According to Jusserand, the French ambassador in Washington, after February 1915 "la tendance en France au mécontentement et à l'aigrüer" against the United States began to manifest itself.⁴⁵³ Landet, the editor of *La Revue hebdomadaire*, claimed that his readership was too fixed in their hostility towards the United States for him to be able to print too many favourable articles, despite his personal affection for "la grande république".⁴⁵⁴

The two primary criticisms levelled by the French against America were that the US was taking the opportunity to enrich themselves while France suffered, and that Wilson's position of neutrality was too favourable to Germany.⁴⁵⁵ The second of these complaints requires little explanation, as the vast majority of the French saw no possible reasonable position of neutrality in the war. The Germans were barbarous aggressors and anyone concerned with justice had no choice but to oppose them. In seeking to mediate as a neutral, Wilson, like Pope Benedict, was guilty of at best falling under the sway of German propaganda and at worst being a supporter of Germany. Responding to reports alleging that Henry James had abandoned his American citizenship, *La Revue* declared that "il serait en effet étrange que de

453 quoted in Yves-Henri Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis, Aout 1914 – Avril 1917*. Lille: Service de reproduction des thésés (1977), p. 674, p. 664.

454 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 665.

455 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, pp. 666-667.

véritable Américains ne soient pas honteux de la politique de faiblesse de leur gouvernement.”⁴⁵⁶ This was characteristic of a discourse, particularly from conservatives, that primarily criticised Wilson personally for American neutrality. Hugues le Roux argued that “Les Américains, qui ont beaucoup d’esprit, - un esprit très pareil au notre, - ont défini leur président en deux lignes. Ils disent ‘M. Wilson n’a pas d’ennemis; mais ses amis ne l’aiment pas beaucoup.’⁴⁵⁷ According to *Le Petit Journal*, “Il y a en effet une grande différence entre l’attitude officielle du gouvernement de Washington et celle du peuple des Etats-Unis.”⁴⁵⁸ The entry to the war of the US saw this stance overturned and Wilson received a very favourable press.⁴⁵⁹

The first criticism was equally unsurprising as it comfortably fitted into the popular French discourse of the time; that anyone not taking part in the war was profiteering from it. It also chimed in neatly with a theme from before the war, that American businessmen were ruthless in their pursuit of money, the only thing that concerned them.⁴⁶⁰ An American correspondent in France wrote that “L’impression va grandissant ici que les Américains considèrent la guerre comme étant purement et simplement une occasion de faire l’argent sans qu’ils aient à tenir le moindre compte des questions de droit et de principe.”⁴⁶¹ *L’Ouest-Éclair* spoke of the American army arriving in France “Hommes d’affaires, ils traiteront la guerre comme une affaire”, while Ferri-Pisani in his book about the United States described them as a nation of merchants.⁴⁶² *La Dépêche* argued that “Pendant que la vieille Europe s’épuise dans une formidable guerre qui ruine ses ressources et son crédit et qui compromet l’avenir, l’Amérique s’efforce flévreusement de profiter des circonstances favorables qui s’offrent à elle pour conquérir le marché du monde”.⁴⁶³ Though the United States was undoubtedly a modern power, the *Dépêche*’s reference to “old Europe” is a reminder that America was only the inheritor of European civilisation. *La Dépêche* also noted demands for Paris to have its lights switched back on again to allow rich

456 quoted in Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, pp. 671-672.

457 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 2 April, 1916.

458 quoted in Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 677 See also pp. 670-673.

459 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, pp. 845-847.

460 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 73.

461 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 666.

462 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 15 June, 1917, Ferri-Pisani, *L’Intérêt et l’idéal des États-Unis*, p. 35.

American tourists to enjoy the city's attractions and observed ironically that this should clearly take precedence over the security of Parisian citizens.⁴⁶⁴

A survey of a number of Parisians by the New York Times in February 1916 on the subject of French attitudes towards the US got the following response:

3 claimed to be disappointed, having thought the Americans to be a proud people, they now seemed to be "une nation de lâches"

2 wondered if the US was scared of Germany

8 condemned the US for lacking courage

1 estimated that the American failure to respond to the deaths of its citizens in submarine attacks lessened its standing in the world

12 took a broadly anti-American line

19 didn't comment

4 approved of Wilson's pacific policy and wisdom in avoiding the war

1 acknowledged the difficult position of the US

3 professed great admiration for the US

5 responded "que tout ce que peut faire l'Amérique pour gêner l'Allemagne les réjouit".⁴⁶⁵

There were still some positive expressions made towards America, largely based on ideas of American generosity and the historical links and shared ideals of the two nations. *La Renaissance politique, littéraire et artistique* published several admiring accounts of the US, amongst them Henri Bergson's view "Ne cherchons pas ailleurs que dans cette communauté d'idéal et d'idéalisme la source de la sympathie profonde qui a toujours uni entre elles la France et l'Amérique." For Paul Adam, New York was "le seuil de la Terre Libre" while Eugène Delard asked "Ne sommes nous pas fils des mêmes libertés?"⁴⁶⁶ In the analysis of Yves Nouailhat, the cultural elite was far more likely to have a positive view of the US at this time than the mass of the population, while Americans themselves preferred to stay in Paris, claiming that anti-American animosity was strongly held in the provinces.⁴⁶⁷

463 *La Dépêche*, 20 March, 1916.

464 *La Dépêche*, 1 January, 1916.

465 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 670.

466 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, pp. 695-696.

467 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 683.

Once America entered the war, the trajectory of public opinion towards the American intervention followed a predictable path. In the newspapers, the arrival of American troops in France was naturally described in hagiographic fashion.⁴⁶⁸ However, the expectations that were raised by the United States joining the war were not immediately realised, and dissatisfaction grew. The slow introduction of American troops to the front line led the French infantry to believe that the Americans were taking the safe sections of the front, and leaving the French to fight the bloody battles.⁴⁶⁹ Late in 1917, workers in the Loire-Inférieure were asked if they wanted to work in the United States. The police reported that not only was this proposition universally rejected, but it also aroused comments questioning the effectiveness of the American intervention.⁴⁷⁰ As late as January 1918, the *Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme* commented that some people were impatient at how long it was taking for a meaningful contribution from the US to be made, although the newspaper claimed not to share this opinion.⁴⁷¹ The idea that American troops were absent from the front lines inevitably led to speculation as to what else they might be doing, naturally focusing on the potential corruption of French womanhood.⁴⁷² “Ils font la guerre à l’arrière avec les gonzesses” wrote one soldier, while another argued “Il faut les éloigner le plus possible de notre intimité: que de désunions vont-ils semer dans les familles, où allons-nous?”⁴⁷³ We shall return to this issue later.

Even after the United States did arrive in the war, its wealth caused some problems. It was feared that the arrival of American troops in Bordeaux might lead to a rise in prices.⁴⁷⁴ By September 1917, a woman called Lili, from Bordeaux, was complaining, “Malgré les prix qui augmentent tous les jours on achète plus que jamais, les magasins sont bondés et les rues fort animées, il est vrai qu’il y a beaucoup d’étrangers, beaucoup d’américains surtout, il me tarde de les voir partir pour le front...”⁴⁷⁵ A letter picked up from the censor in January 1919, from a person in Orange, argued that life could not return to normal until the foreigners left, because

468 e.g. *L’Eclair du Midi*, 1 July, 1917.

469 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 81.

470 AN F/7/13361 Police Reports from the Loire-Inférieure, 1 January, 1918.

471 *Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme*, 1 January, 1918.

472 Kaspí, *Le Temps des Américains*, p. 129.

473 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 428.

474 *La Petite Gironde*, 7 July, 1917.

they bought regardless of the price. A letter from Paris complained of Americans “munis de beaucoup d’argent et d’appétits voraces [...] il en va de même en province où l’on murmure contre ces envahisseurs qui gaspillent autant qu’ils consomment.”⁴⁷⁶ The high cost of life was blamed on the Americans not simply because they had more money, but because they were businessmen by nature. “Ce sont tout simplement des négociants déguisés en soldats, qui tâtent le terrain et posent des jalons pour l’envahissement commercial et industriel de l’après-guerre.”⁴⁷⁷ This argument placed the Americans amongst those considered to be profiteering from the war, rather than amongst those who were sacrificing themselves, which was one of the most fundamental divisions in French thought.

However, when the American soldiers did arrive in the trenches in significant numbers they were warmly welcomed.⁴⁷⁸ The censors noted that “L’enthousiasme envers les Américains grandit à mesure qu’ils prennent part à l’action commune” and Nicot asserts that, by the advance of 1918, “Les Américains sont en France les plus populaires des soldats alliés, ils sont les grands favoris. On peut estimer qu’il en est parlé dans 30% des lettres au moins.”⁴⁷⁹ One soldier compared the Americans favourably to the English: while the Englishman was “une allié; l’Américain c’est un copain.”⁴⁸⁰ In general, the American soldiers were found to be more congenial company than the English, and another soldier wrote that “les Américains sont des gens remarquables qui se battent en idéalistes,” unlike the English, “qui se battent en commerçants”. Their generosity was also regularly remarked upon.⁴⁸¹ *Le Petit Marseillais* produced a supplement, its only one of the war, detailing a conference of mutual admiration convened to commemorate American Independence Day.⁴⁸² Crucially, as *La Dépêche* made clear, the American soldiers arriving in France had immense respect for France and its heroic army.⁴⁸³ Recognition of France’s glories and her efforts in the war was always welcome, and Hugues le Roux tried to deflect

475 Baconnier et al, *La Plume au Fusil*, p. 333.

476 AN F/23/158 Dossiers du Service de Documentation étrangère concernant la France. Letters highlighted by the censor, January 1919

477 quoted in Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains*, p. 130.

478 Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains*, p. 130.

479 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, pp. 431-432, p. 465.

480 Englander, “The French Soldier. 1914-18” p. 58.

481 Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains*, p. 296.

482 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 29 July, 1917.

post-war criticism of Americans by arguing that it was appreciation of France that had prompted the United States to enter the war. He argued that while England, Italy and Belgium were forced to join the war, the US chose to do so.

Parce qu'il leur était insupportable de penser qu'un pays comme la France, qui a porté si haut le respect de la dignité humaine, le goût de la fraternité, la passion de la liberté, allait, malgré son héroïsme, être écrasée, s'ils n'accouraient pas à l'aide, sous la botte des soudards du Kaiser.⁴⁸⁴

Supportive commentators regularly focused on arguing that the US intervention was not based on calculation. Henriette Perrin's book aimed at schoolchildren, *Nos Alliés les Américains*, emphasised that the American intervention was disinterested, for selfless reasons, while in describing France's allies, John Charpentier singled out for special mention "la beauté chevaleresque du geste des États-Unis."⁴⁸⁵

The French were particularly impressed by the physiques of the Americans. Kaspi recounted numerous positive impressions generated by the appearance of American troops as they arrived. "Il y a des types coustauds (...) Ils sont tous jolis". "Les gaillards ont l'air allants". "Ils ont l'air très robustes".⁴⁸⁶ The *Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme* praised the qualities of energy, vigour and improvisation in the Yankee "race".⁴⁸⁷ This impression was so commonly recognised that a medical advert could ask, in confident expectation of a positive response, "N'avez-vous pas été frappé par l'étonnante vigueur et la robuste énergie des Américains."⁴⁸⁸ This was consistent with pre-war attitudes, which, as Alan Pitt has argued, focused heavily on the energy of Americans. For Pitt "the word [énergie] was to dominate French studies of American life."⁴⁸⁹

Nevertheless, there were some elements of condescension towards the new arrivals, in particular their enthusiasm, in which the French noted echoes of their own optimistic

483 *La Dépêche*, 1 July, 1917.

484 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 16 March, 1919.

485 Henriette Perrin, *Nos Alliés les Américains*, Paris: Larousse (1917) p. 3, p. 11, Charpentier, *Notre Nouvelle Amie L'Angleterre* p. 231.

486 Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains*, pp. 128-129.

487 *Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme*, 14 February, 1917.

488 *La Dépêche*, 11 January, 1918.

489 Alan Pitt, "A Changing Anglo-Saxon Myth: its Development and Function in French Political Thought, 1860-1914" in *French History* 14: 2 (2001) p. 166.

bravado of 1914.⁴⁹⁰ Eugène Le Breton criticised President Wilson for saying, in his announcement on entering the war, that the United States had no grievance against the German people, merely against their leaders.” He noted that the English, “plus sensibles aux leçons de l’histoire,” had not made the same mistake.⁴⁹¹ When the US was about to enter the war on France’s side, Jean Guiscard in the *Lyon Republicain* argued that it was motivated not by an understanding of the European situation but by commercial interest and its own idealism.

Les Etats-Unis, nation primesautière qui regarde l’Europe de loin, n’entendent pas grand’chose aux détails des querelles européennes. Ils ne connaissent à fond ni l’histoire, ni la géographie. Mais ils discernent très bien, par contre, l’innovation capitale dont ils ont besoin pour eux-mêmes; ayant horreur de la guerre, à laquelle ils préfèrent des occupations plus morales et plus lucratives, ils veulent que l’immense majorité des Etats qui composent le monde soient des Etats équitablement satisfaits, qui ne posséderont, ni trop peu pour leur appétit, ni trop pour leur forces, et qui, par conséquent, seront à la fois intéressés et aptes à maintenir la paix.⁴⁹²

While Guiscard’s description is not a particularly hostile one, it does emphasise the naivety of the young nation, impulsive and ignorant of history and geography with utopian ideals.

The Americans were also not spared the recurrent comparison of foreigners to children, according to one French soldier: “les Américains obéissent à leurs officiers (qui sont très gentils avec eux) comme des enfants, ayant en eux une confiance aveugle.”⁴⁹³ The theme recurred in Ferri-Pisani’s book. He argued that “Yankee optimism” had no need for reason, but was instinctive “comme tous les gestes d’une race jeune.” Earlier he had argued that as a “[p]euple à peine adolescent, les yankees présentent encore les caractéristiques de l’enfance”.⁴⁹⁴ This didn’t undermine their effectiveness as allies though.

490 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, pp. 431-432.

491 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 6 April, 1917.

492 *Lyon Republicain*, 12 February, 1917.

493 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 435.

494 Ferri-Pisani, *L’Intérêt et l’idéal*, p. 36, p. 9.

Par d'aucuns qui ont *regardé* cette race yankee sans la *voir*, j'ai entendu dire: "Ce sont de grands enfants." Peut-être, mais attendez-les à l'œuvre, quand, menacés dans leur *intérêt*, blessés dans leur *idéal*, ils lutteront à nos côtés! Ils seront les grands enfants terribles.⁴⁹⁵

Even an admirer like Aristide Rieffel, arguing why Americans were so much better at getting rich than the French had to add the caveat that they lacked any superior intelligence. "L'Américain s'enrichit parce qu'il a constamment, énergiquement, la volonté d'être heureux, et parce que l'action est pour lui une joie. Il est supérieur au Français, non par intelligence, certes, mais par une plus grande intensité du vouloir vivre."⁴⁹⁶

However, the one aspect of behaviour in which mistrust was a constant was sexual behaviour. Huss argues that in popular images of Allied soldiers, while they were often depicted as sympathetic, they also had the potential to corrupt French women.⁴⁹⁷ Many postcards later in the war featured "ad nauseam le thème des femmes faciles et vénales" when they encountered American troops. For instance, among the series "Attraction Parisiennes" one postcard featured a woman lifting her skirt to "montre ses bas" in front of four voyeurs from each of the principal allied nations.⁴⁹⁸

Pourcher describes several incidents where the sexual behaviour of the allies caused tension amongst the French population, including one in which violence broke out between French and allied troops over a girl.⁴⁹⁹ For Mgr. Baudrillart, rector of the Institut catholique de Paris, the sexual behaviour of Allied troops was a regular concern. He noted in March 1916 "On évacue beaucoup à d'écoles de l'Artois: l'immoralité des Anglais est telle qu'il y a beaucoup à craindre pour les enfants." In August, he argued that in Amiens promiscuity and prostitution was rife and that "Les Anglais dépassent tout en fait de débauches."⁵⁰⁰ A report by the Nantes Commissaire Centrale (in October 1918) said of American troops "Il n'y a qu'à circuler quelque peu dans les rues de la ville, le soir, ou dans la journée les jours de fête, pour les voir se promener bras dessus bras dessous, non seulement avec des femmes ou des filles

495 Ferri-Pisani, *L'Intérêt et l'idéal des États-Unis*, p. 144.

496 *La Dépêche*, 7 July, 1919.

497 Huss, *Histoires de famille*, p. 209.

498 Huss, *Histoires de famille*, pp. 208-209.

499 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, pp. 203-4.

majeures, mais encore avec de véritables gamines de 14 à 16 ans.”⁵⁰¹ In a letter written to *L'Œuvre* in 1919, one Frenchman placed the two notions of Americans as ruthless businessmen and successful womanisers. “Certes, nous avons eu le grand tort d’être à la Marne ou à Verdun durant que les Américains gagnaient les dollars qui leur permettent aujourd’hui de séduire bien des cœurs.”⁵⁰² The problem of relations between soldiers and French women was considered serious enough that the Americans responsible for the Foyers du Soldat produced a poster, which declared:

“Quand tu parles de la femme
Pense à ta mère
À ta soeur, à ta fiancée
et tu ne diras pas de bêtises”⁵⁰³

Craig Gibson’s study of British troops in North-Eastern France highlights similar complaints. One censor wrote that “Many letters of young women, who are in the English zone write to English soldiers as if they were engaged.” A correspondent decried the authorities for doing nothing to prevent the “debauchery of women with troops from all nationalities”. Both romantic dalliances with the troops and amateur prostitution raised the hackles of local society.⁵⁰⁴ This impropriety was attacked by French women not simply as vice on the part of Allied soldiers at the expense of the purity of French womanhood, but also argued that it undermined international female solidarity by angering women in Britain and elsewhere who had lent their men to the defence of France and expected them to return morally and physically pure.

There were clearly similar fears back in the United States to judge from a note sent by the Union of American Women to l’Association des Femmes de France.

Nous vous envoyons nos maris, nos fils, nos frères pour vous aider dans la lutte contre l’opresseur. Mais nous vous demandons ce que votre gouvernement et vous-mêmes comptez faire pour les

500 Christian Gury, *Grande Guerre et Homophilie*. Paris: Éditions Kimé (2000) p. 73.

501 Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains*, p. 300.

502 LeNaour, *Misères et tourments*, p.258 This quote also testifies to the perceived susceptibility of women to favour rich men rather than heroic ones.

503 Huss, *Histoires de famille*, p. 209.

504 Gibson, “Through French Eyes” p. 181.

préservé, et nous le renvoyer, après la victoire définitive et complète, propres physiquement et moralement comme ils le sont en nous quittant.⁵⁰⁵

Occasionally there were attempts to put a more positive spin on it. One journalist wrote that for American soldiers in France “Les femmes françaises leur paraissent plus jolies et plus intelligentes que les Américaines. Ils sont émerveillés de voir l’ordre, la propreté, la coquetterie de nos campagnes.”⁵⁰⁶ The article continued by asserting the encouraging possibility of American immigration into France, reversing the trend of French emigration towards the Americas. In *L’Eclair du Midi*, Jules Veran took a similar line, taking pride in the attractiveness of French women to soldiers from English speaking countries. On marriages between English soldiers and French women he argued, “Elle est très heureuse, d’autant plus que le mélange des deux races ne peut donner que de bons résultats: vous verrez que le type franco-anglais sera très bien.” Soon, there would be Franco-American marriages, because “Ce serait bien le diable si les Américains ne se laissant séduire, eux aussi, par nos françaises. Et nous aurons la douleur de voir nos charmantes soeurs [...] traverser l’Océan.”⁵⁰⁷

Pierre Mille suggested that the Franco-American relationship had begun as a honeymoon, between mutually admiring democratic peoples. Then the ardour cooled, the Americans were unimpressed by the perceived rapacity of the French merchants, while the French found the Americans a little brash and were shocked by American behaviour towards women. The blame for this could not be laid solely with the Americans, as they had been confused by the differences in morality between the sexually liberated women they had encountered in the big cities, and the conservative morality of the provinces. Mille argued that

Il en existe maintenant, dans nos grandes villes, une classe assez nombreuse, presque spéciale à la France, et pour qui la morale sexuelle a singulièrement évolué. Sans faire grande attention à ce qu’on appelle ‘la vertu’ elles considèrent qu’elles ont le droit du choix, et, quand elles ont choisi, sans s’inquiéter du mariage, elles n’en exigent pas moins une certaine somme d’égards.

505 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 14 July, 1918.

506 *Le Cri de Paris* 28 July, 1917.

507 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 4 June, 1918.

The American soldiers being “young, unsophisticated and coarse,” mistook this attitude for prostitution and thus believed all women in France were prostitutes, a misapprehension which caused much conflict when applied in rural areas which remained profoundly imbued with a conservative Catholic morality. Indeed, Mille believed there were no regions in the world where women’s morals were more serious. It was a shame, Mille considered, that once these hurdles had been overcome and genuine understanding was being achieved, that these “jeunes gens braves et simples” were going back home.⁵⁰⁸

Mille’s colleague on the *Dépêche*, J. H. Rosny, also drew a distinction between the conduct of the Americans in the big cities and elsewhere, mentioning in an otherwise very generous assessment of the Americans, “Leurs mœurs sont vraisemblablement assez purs; il est difficile d’en juger ici, où ils sont un peu surveillés; [...] A Paris, où les Américains sont moins surveillés, on constate qu’ils ne sont pas insensibles aux grâces de nos péripatéticiennes.”⁵⁰⁹

Edmond Haraucourt argued that the war had revised many opinions. “[L]’Amérique, ordinairement considérée comme la patrie du dollar et des hommes pratiques, jetterait son sang et son or avec un désintéressement absolu, pour venir à notre aide, au nom de la justice et du droit?”⁵¹⁰ However, it should be noted that the stereotype of a mercenary country, interested above all in enriching itself, reappeared swiftly in the post-war period. Giraud argued:

Il semble aussi qu’à la belle ferveur d’idéisme qui avait soulevé tout ce jeune peuple contre l’iniquité germanique, et qui l’avait armé comme pour une croisade, ait succédé une ‘vague de réalisme’ qui pousserait nombre d’Américains à se contenter de la fructueuse ‘chasse aux dollars’.⁵¹¹

Giraud was not the only one to display scepticism towards Americans in the immediate aftermath of war. A soldier wrote early in 1919 that “Les Américains commencent à fatiguer la population des régions où ils résident [...] On les trouve

508 *La Dépêche*, 4 July, 1919.

509 *La Dépêche*, 30 July, 1918. Note here also that American troops, just like colonial workers earlier, are believed to require surveillance in order to ensure their good behaviour; rather than being able to exercise self-discipline.

510 *La Dépêche*, 16 July, 1918.

sans-gêne, prêts à s'installer comme en pays conquis, souvent brutaux et primitifs.”⁵¹² Hugues le Roux, a very pro-American writer who had been in the US for part of the war, wrote an article entitled “Nos Amis les Américains” in March 1919. While he was very positive about the US, he noted some of the criticisms made about the Americans in France.

Vous connaissez le proverbe: ‘Les amis, ils font toujours plaisir, quand ce n’est pas quand ils arrivent, c’est quand ils s’en vont.’ Eh, sans doute, les Américains ont été chez nous les utiles ouvriers de la dernière heure! Mais quoi? Voici la paix. Pourquoi ne se hâtent-ils pas davantage de retraverser l’Océan? Ils ont trop d’argent dans les mains à dépenser chez nous, dans un temps où tout manque. C’est, pour une part, leur faute si tout renchérit. Et puis, ils sont trop bruyants. Ils tiennent trop de place, et ils rient dans une langue que l’on ne comprend pas.⁵¹³

Once again, we see the recurrence of pre-war antipathy, in this case to the brashness of Americans, in the immediate aftermath of the war.

White Europeans

The white workers from elsewhere in Europe who appeared in much greater numbers during the war were rarely welcomed. The *Bulletin Confidentiel* of November 1917 noted that the arrival in Rennes of a thousand Italian soldiers to be employed in the arsenal provoked “grande surprise et vive émotion”.⁵¹⁴ There was little integration between French and non-French workers, and the suspicion that foreign workers were being used to bring wages down or as potential strike breakers remained strong.

Russian workers became much less welcome after 1917 when Russia agreed a separate peace with Germany. At a meeting of the Syndicat de l’Arsenal et de la Cartoucherie in Toulouse, a worker complained that nothing had been done to remove foreign workers, he was particularly upset by the presence of Russian workers. Froment, the secretary of the union, responded that the Russians had been in France

511 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 742.

512 Englander, “The French Soldier. 1914-18” p. 58.

513 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 16 March, 1919.

514 Patrick Mougenet, “14-18, Quelles traces de pacifisme dans l’Ille-et-Vilaine en guerre.” *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l’Ouest* 99:2 (1992) p. 182.

before the war, and had at that time been part of the allied nations. They were not responsible for what had happened in Russia, and it was unfair to repatriate them now.⁵¹⁵ Likewise, when Greece seemed to be taking a less favourable stance towards France under the influence of the King, Greek support for their monarch was instantly dismissed by *L'Ouest-Éclair* as the product of a superstitious nature.⁵¹⁶

In other cases, the reception of European workers depended on whether they fitted in with the dominant discourse of the war in France, which glorified those who suffered hardship or loss in the struggle for victory, and condemned those who were seen to be profiteering or shirking from the war. Thus, a report on Greek workers in Nantes claimed “The inhabitants of Nantes get on well with the Greeks, provided that they know that they are not Turks, but Christian Greeks persecuted by the Turks.”⁵¹⁷ A poster raising money for *La Journée Serbe* in 1916 depicted a mass of humanity in retreat, homeless families alongside wounded soldiers. This got across a twin message; that the Serb population deserved help for the suffering they had endured as a result of the war, but also the presence of the wounded soldiers indicated the contribution they had made.⁵¹⁸ In 1917, soldiers staying in barracks in Marseilles attacked the Spanish population, which was resented for its neutrality in the war.⁵¹⁹ The magnitude of the French effort could not be disparaged, so some Belgians aroused hostility because they “prétendent que la résistance de leur pays a sauvé la France”⁵²⁰ In 1917 a speaker to the Lyon Chamber of Commerce, proposing a post-war boycott of German products, declared that customers should also beware German goods disguised as neutral merchandise. Some genuine neutral producers might suffer from this, but the actions of most neutral countries during the war deserved ostracism.⁵²¹ According to the soldiers from the Languedoc who Jules Maurin interviewed, the Spanish were seen as exploiting the situation and one soldier

515 AN F/7/12986/1, 27 April, 1918.

516 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 10 January, 1916.

517 Horne, “Immigrant Workers in France” p.74. The same applied to colonial soldiers too. Postal censors for the Madagascan contingent noted approvingly that “L’admiration est grande pour la France, et contrairement aux Indochinois, ils reconnaissent la valeur du peuple et de l’armée française.” Valensky, *Le Soldat Occulté*, p. 336.

518 [WWW] <http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/images/pp_fra_12.jpg> [Accessed 31 October 2004]

519 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, p. 180.

520 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, p. 169.

521 AN F/12/8009/B, 24 October, 1917.

believed they were taking the opportunity “pour prendre des exploitations agricoles et des commerces et s’enrichir.” By contrast refugees from northern France and Belgium were well received “puisque la guerre les avait chassés de chez eux.”⁵²²

How much of the reaction to the new arrivals on French soil was due simply to anti-foreign prejudice, and how much was due to more subtle reasons, can be clarified by an examination of the attitudes to refugees, who were often French. In Brittany, Mougenet argues that refugees, whether French or Belgian, were immediately welcomed, seen as victims of the war, while foreign workers were seen as profiting from it. However, as the numbers of refugees rose, from 2,500 in August 1914 towards 22,000 in September 1918, there are signs of changes in attitude.⁵²³ There were complaints about the fishing practices of the evacuated Belgians’ boats. In the consideration of an application for the allocation by Belgian refugee Georges Rombaux, it was noted that “Il dit qu’il n’acceptera qu’une situation en rapport avec ses capacités intellectuelles et ses titres ... Et l’on n’est pas bien sûr qu’il n’ait pas quelques moyens”. With other potentially deserving families having been rejected, “l’acceptance de la demande de M. Rombaux pourrait être considérée comme une prime au chômage volontaire et ferait sûrement des mécontents.”⁵²⁴

In Anjou, Jacobzone notes that the relationship between the populace and the refugees was strained, particularly in areas where large numbers were concentrated, and Germain Pouget has described the difficulties between refugees and their hosts in the Cantal.⁵²⁵ The Prefect of the Saône-et-Loire blamed refugees for disturbing the peace, reporting that “à la suite de l’introduction d’éléments étrangers à la région, de nouvelles tendances se sont manifestées.”⁵²⁶ The sympathy that refugees gained from having the ill fortune of being driven from their homes soon dissipated if they were felt to be taking advantage of others in their new location. The Committee of Economic Action for the Nantes region argued that residents from the invaded lands

522 Jules Maurin, *Armée - Guerre - Société: Soldats Languedociens (1889-1919)*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne (1982), pp. 593-594.

523 Mougenet, “14-18, Quelles traces de pacifisme dans l’Ille-et-Vilaine en guerre.” p. 183.

524 AN F/7/12936, May, 1916.

525 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 260, pp. 270-273, Germain Pouget, *Le Cantal dans la Grande Guerre (1914-1919): La vie quotidienne*. Aurillac: Société des lettres, sciences et arts ‘La Haute-Auvergne’ (1998) pp. 197-244, esp. pp. 199-204.

“qui ne seront plus sur leur sol, ne se sentiront nullement attirés vers le travail” while in Toulouse, a the committee suggested that refugees in the region whether French, Belgian or other, should be put under an obligation to work.⁵²⁷ Margueritte Yerta’s novel *Les six femmes et l’invasion* criticised those who profiteered from the refugees and those who treated them harshly, only to see these criticisms removed by the French censor.⁵²⁸

Miners who had been exiled from the north and relocated to work in the Midi integrated badly with the local workers, missed their homes and worried about their families. It was also claimed that they enjoyed the local wine too much, to such an extent that in June 1915, a report on the employment of refugees in mines claimed that: “Les scènes scandaleuses qui résultent de ces habitudes d’intempérance constituent un exemple déplorable pour la population ouvrière locale”⁵²⁹ This division is highlighted in a report by the Commissaire Spécial in Chalon-sur-Saone 15 August 1917. There had been disturbances in Montceau-les-Mines that had resulted in one death and several injuries. It had begun when a mining company had given its employees a bonus and there had been some celebrations.

La haine sourde entre mineurs montcelliens et mineurs de Nord n’attendait qu’une occasion pour se manifester ouvertement. [...] La conduite tapageuse et l’attitude défiant des ouvriers du Nord provoqua des incidents de cabarets qui dégénèrent en bagarres sur la voie publique dans plusieurs quartiers de la ville.

Vous ne vous imaginez pas à quel point les gens du Nord se sont rendus odieux aux yeux de leurs camarades du bassin de Montceau et de la population montcellienne. Que ce soit au point de vue individuel, ou sur le terrain syndical ou professionnel, l’élément du Nord traite le nôtre par le dédain, par le mépris. Il entend ne pas se plier aux coutumes du pays et imposer les siennes. Le tapage nocturne est de règle en rentrant chez soi. Enfin l’intempérance est à la base de tout.⁵³⁰

526 AN F/7/13365, 19 April, 1918.

527 AN F/12/8008, Minutes of meeting of the Committee of Economic Action for the 11th Region, 11 January, 1918, AN F/12/8004, Minutes of meeting of the Committee of Economic Action for the 17th Region, 25 February, 1916.

528 The offending passages remained in the English edition. Grayzel, *Woman’s Identities at War*, p. 40.

529 Raymond Huard, “Les Mineurs du Gard pendant la Guerre de 1914-1918; Guerre, Syndicalisme, Mentalités.” in *Économie et Société en Languedoc-Roussillon de 1789 à nos jours*. Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry (1978) p. 279.

530 Marguin, *La Saône-et-Loire pendant la guerre de 14-18*.

The tone of the report indicates that the antipathy towards the miners from the north from the local community was shared by the authorities in the region.

Further evidence of the mistrust between the refugees and those responsible for taking them in is highlighted by a cartoon which appeared in the “*Journal des réfugiés du Nord*” which depicted a southerner saying to a displaced northerner “Maintenant que vous êtes ruinés, nous allons prendre vos industries.” This brought about an injured response by *L’Eclair du Midi*, which was always quick to respond to perceived slurs from the North.⁵³¹ A small advert in the *Dépêche* sought employment in the same place for a female chef and chambermaid, both refugees. They declared “Préférence personnes du Nord”.⁵³²

If French refugees created tension as strangers to the area, and as a potential drain on resources, those from outside France’s borders were still more suspect. There was also a consistent tendency for the French to blame foreigners for any problems that arose. Strikes in Paris, 31 May 1917, were ascribed to foreign influence by *L’Eclair du Midi*, claiming the presence of a large number of Swiss, Greeks, and especially Turks.⁵³³ The paper also applauded Clemenceau for declaring his lack of astonishment at the number of foreigners involved in the strikes. “Nous n’avons pas besoin d’étrangers dans nos murs, à moins que leur présence, dans l’intérêt de la défense nationale, ne soit scrupuleusement justifiée.”⁵³⁴ According to the under-secretary of state for artillery and munitions, foreigners should be considered to be under suspicion of being German agents, bent on attacking munitions factories.⁵³⁵ Meanwhile, “louche Espagnols” were suspected of being agents of the enemy.⁵³⁶ In the Lozère, many mayors refused to try to lodge those who the departmental administration had decided were “les réfugiés non suspects” because their population saw a spy in every

531 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 9 September, 1916.

532 *La Dépêche*, 10 July, 1918.

533 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 1 June, 1917.

534 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 6 June, 1917.

535 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 14 August, 1916.

536 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 305.

foreigner.⁵³⁷ A report by the Prefect of the Savoie argued that a range of nationalities led to greater disturbances in factories.

La main d'œuvre de ces usines est composée en majeure partie d'ouvriers du pays et de travailleurs italiens qui ne sont affiliés à aucune organisation, et qui obéiraient difficilement à un mot d'ordre donné.”

But in the metal factories of Ugine “Le personnel est beaucoup plus mélangé et hétéroclite; de temps à autre, de petites manifestations se produisent.⁵³⁸ Most common was the accusation that foreigners were gaining financial benefit by exploiting the French. At a meeting of *mutilés* and veterans in Marseille, M. Marchetti argued that: “Pendant que nous, combattants français, sous les balles, contenions et finissions par repousser l’envahisseur, d’autres à l’arrière, parmi lesquels beaucoup d’étrangers s’enrichissaient scandaleusement à nos dépens.”⁵³⁹ When the third arrondissement of Paris saw protests against Russians and Poles it was because of “jeunes Russes et Polonais qui continuent leur commerce réalisant, prétendent leurs concurrents, des bénéfices beaucoup plus élevés qu’avant la guerre”.⁵⁴⁰ In *L’Eclair du Midi*, Jean Legrave commented on the high proportion of nouveaux-riches who were of foreign origin, and who appeared to have profited from the war. That the “race d’origine” of these men was sometimes difficult to ascertain, only seemed to increase his indignation, and he condemned the French reluctance to repatriate foreigners.⁵⁴¹

Jews and anti-Semitism

The Jewish population in France offers a slightly different situation as they were officially French, but often seen as outside or against the national community. For the Jews, the *Union Sacrée* offered the chance to prove themselves totally committed to their nation. To some extent they succeeded, Maurice Barrès claimed to be convinced of the loyalty of France’s Jews, and many others must have felt similarly. The post-war growth in Jewish population, from 150,000 in 1919 to 200,000 in 1930, did not

537 Maurin, *Armée - Guerre - Société*, p. 586.

538 AN F/7/13365, 22 July, 1917.

539 AN F/7/13243, 16 March, 1919.

540 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, p. 168.

541 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 17 October, 1917.

result in any visible increase in anti-Semitism. The right-wing leagues tried to attract Jewish support and especially Jewish war veterans. Only Action Française held aloof. By 1931 *Gringoire* argued “There are no more anti-Dreyfusards ... They’re either dead or they’re converted.”⁵⁴² During the war, *La Petite Gironde* made a similar point in an article discussing Drumont and the popularity of his ideas which “apparut excessive dans la principe, sinon dans quelque details.” The war had changed that though, “Juifs, catholiques et libres penseurs versent leur sang pour une seule et même cause avec la même noblesse. Edouard Drumont meurt oublié.”⁵⁴³

One of the reasons that anti-Semitic attitudes may have been altered more favourably, is that Jews had traditionally faced a hostile portrait that stressed that their true loyalties were not to France and their patriotism could not be relied upon. Jews fighting and dying in the trenches offered a direct contradiction to this. By contrast, while the willingness of other races to fight on the French side was well regarded, it did not invalidate the negative views that many French had of their essential characteristics. Nevertheless, again we should be wary of assigning too much importance to the effects of the war. As Vicki Caron notes, anti-Semitism had been in decline since 1899 while the anti-Semitic group in parliament was wound up in 1906.⁵⁴⁴ Equally, as soon as the political landscape became more troubled, the Jews became a target again. In the 1920s, nationalists sought to blame the “Dreyfusard party,” for being responsible for the carnage of 1914-1918 by weakening the army and thus national defence.⁵⁴⁵ The 1930s saw even more hostility, the depression reawakening all the old complaints against Jewish “profiteers”, then the Jews escaping from Nazi Germany were portrayed as trying to provoke a war. Leon Blum’s accession to power did not help.⁵⁴⁶ Indeed if Paula Hyman’s assertion that “The years 1906-1918 can [...] be seen as a golden age for French Jewry” is accepted, then the conclusion of the war marked the end of an age of increased acceptance for French

542 Vicki Caron, “The Jewish question from Dreyfus to Vichy.” in Martin S. Alexander (ed.) *French History since Napoleon*. London: Arnold (1999) p. 180.

543 *La Petite Gironde*, 20 February, 1917.

544 Caron, “The Jewish question from Dreyfus to Vichy.” p. 179, Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the time of the Dreyfus Affair*, Rutherford [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press (1982) p. 216.

545 Michel Winock, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Fascism in France*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (1998), p. 119.

546 Caron, “The Jewish question from Dreyfus to Vichy.” pp. 180-182.

Jews.⁵⁴⁷ Thus, the war may have hastened the decline of anti-Semitism, and temporarily rendered it dormant as a political issue. But anti-Semitic ideology was too deeply entrenched to be significantly attenuated by the war. Even during the conflict, committed anti-Semites did not see Jews as part of the *Union Sacrée*, Franconi associated them with shirkers, while another soldier associated Jews with the traitors in the government, claiming that “en réalité nous sommes toujours gouvernés par les Caillaux, Malvy, les Juifs tels que Bolo et une Chambre de vendus comme Turmel, Humbert et bien d’autres.”⁵⁴⁸ Tony Tollett wrote a book about the French art market alleging collaboration between Jews and Germans to undermine French culture, drawing on traditional stereotypes of shady Jewish business practises combining with methodical German planning.⁵⁴⁹ In 1919, Urbain Gohier’s book *la Vielle France* denounced Jews as “peuplade de nègres mal blanchis” and argued that anti-Semitism was a reaction of “légitime défense” for the French.⁵⁵⁰ Even Barrès praise for Jewish patriotism was conditioned by his assertion that it was intellectual not instinctual, and thus presumably could not always be relied upon. The *Univers israélite* called for the realization that “the enemies of Judaism are still with us” despite the lessening popularity of Drumont style anti-Semitism.⁵⁵¹

Equally, the good conduct of French Jews did not improve attitudes towards those from other nations. The conservative *L’Eclair du Midi*, while generally not prone to anti-Semitism towards French Jews during the war, nonetheless displayed traces of it when dealing with foreign Jews, in particular in Russia. J de Morgan offered a time-honoured view of malign Jewish influence in the corridors of power when he wrote about “tout un peuple, celui des Grands Russiens, qui, obéissant aux suggestions d’une poignée de métèques ...” while the newspaper happily latched on to reports in Russian newspapers that Lenin was not a Russian, but a German spy, whose real name was Goldberg.⁵⁵² This pattern was mirrored in its more left wing counterpart, *La*

547 Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*. New York: Columbia University Press (1979) p. 34.

548 quoted in John Cruickshank, *Variations on a Catastrophe: Some French Responses to the Great War*. New York: Oxford University Press (1982) p. 71 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 100.

549 Tony Tollet, *De l’influence de la corporation judéo-allemande des marchands de tableaux de Paris sur l’art français*, Lyon: Rey (1915) p. 20

550 quoted in: Schor, *L’Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 189, p. 183.

551 Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, p. 50, p. 55.

552 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 18 January, 1918, 10 May, 1917.

Dépêche, which said of Jews in the Ottoman Empire: “Il y a des belles femmes en Orient mais ce n’est pas chez les juifs quelle sont. A part de rares exceptions elles sont chétives, sèches, petites avec des profils de chèvre.”⁵⁵³ Sophie Cœuré notes in her study of Franco-Russian relations that police dossiers associated ideas of German influence in France with that of “l’élément russo-juif”. This echoes Lyautey’s aforementioned wish to combat the “infiltrations judéo-bolcheviques”.⁵⁵⁴

La Dépêche also provided a clear example of how anti-Semitic prejudice could be maintained against Jews in France, while apparently excluding French Jews, an exclusion that could always be reversed. The writer, Frelon, discussed the casualties from shells launched at Paris, where apparently the casualties had a disproportionate number of German names. He argued this was because the quarter where the bombs had fallen was home to an exotic population of “israelites d’origine russe, roumaine, galicienne, lesquels, par un phénomène singulier, portent presque tous de noms allemands.” This population had displayed a tendency to shirk military service and was not “en général naturalisée”. Furthermore “[e]lle compte dans son sein des réfugiés de tous genres venus en France pour fuir des persécutions toujours prétendues religieuses bien qu’elles soient souvent simplement judiciaires.” Within this population could be found “la soupçonne de pacifisme, de défaitisme et de pire encore.” He found it amusingly ironic that the Germans had struck amongst these “indésirables”.⁵⁵⁵ In this one passage Frelon conflates a variety of negative perceptions of foreigners; that they were bogus refugees, that they had not adopted French customs and that they undermined the war effort; as characteristic behaviour of foreign Jews. In the same newspaper, Emile Bergerat showed that the war had not changed his belief that Jewishness transcended national boundaries. “Citoyens factices ou naturels de la nation où ils vivent, ils doivent s’entre-tuer sous tous les drapeaux. Le pauvre Ashvérus est en outre condamné au fratricide.”⁵⁵⁶

553 *La Dépêche*, 7 November, 1915.

554 Sophie Cœuré, *La grande lueur à l’est; les Français et l’Union soviétique, 1917-1939*. Paris: Seuil (1999) p. 25. Gautier, *La germanophobie*, p. 46.

555 *La Dépêche*, 16 April, 1918.

556 *La Dépêche*, 14 July, 1917.

As with other groups then, traditional ideas about Jews were maintained. Their lack of rootedness in one nation and their propensity for underhand dealings in particular received regular public outings, albeit usually in criticism of foreign Jews. This flexibility of discourse allowed anti-Semitic ideas to be maintained even by those who praised the patriotic actions of French Jews, before appearing again, reinvigorated, in the 1930s.

Conclusion

The role of each nation in the war clearly had a vital impact on how the French viewed and portrayed the inhabitants of those nations. Citizens from allied countries were usually praised, those from neutral countries were regarded with suspicion while the populations of France's enemies were harshly criticised. While the Germans may have been distrusted before the conflict, the vituperation they received during it was clearly qualitatively different. What is crucial, however, is that the judgements made of all the foreigners encountered by the French during the war drew heavily on existing stereotypes. Whether a nation was allied to the French or ranged against them, their populations' actions were understood within a framework of ideas that had existed for years. Americans were considered idealistic, energetic, friendly, money-oriented and unsophisticated. Russians were backward and credulous peasants. The English were principled, conscientious, fastidious, and aloof. The actions of the inhabitants of these countries were considered to be rooted in these characteristics; praiseworthy actions were explained as a triumph of their positive traits over the negative ones and vice versa.

An example of this is in how the French reacted to military setbacks amongst their allies. When the Italians were forced to retreat, it was usually ascribed to military incompetence or to the suspect temperament of their soldiers. When it was the British who did so, it was more likely to be attributed to a lack of resolve by the British authorities, an unwillingness to fully commit themselves to the war. So for example in the comments quoted earlier from the inauguration of the monument at Artaix, M. Damiron describing Italian setbacks refers to their soldiers panicking, while M. Pegon

spoke of the need for the French to bolster the English to prevent them retreating too easily.⁵⁵⁷ When the performance of the British troops on the Western Front was seen as being inferior to that of the Russian troops in the east during the Brusilov offensive, one French correspondent commented that it seemed the British wanted to preserve their beautiful army for after the war. By contrast, in late 1917 with the Russians engulfed in revolution and the Italians in disarray after their rout at Caporetto, the British troops were praised for their steadfastness.⁵⁵⁸

The Germans received the most attention in French discourse and a consistent stream of vitriol was levelled at them. Once again though, this criticism followed traditional themes and indeed Germany's actions were often explicitly described as being in a historical tradition. The French definition of the Germans as inherently militaristic and barbarous also informed their post war actions. A Rhenish police commissioner claimed that (unlike colonial troops) French troops occupying the Rhineland considered the Germans "an inferior people".⁵⁵⁹ Laird Boswell has argued that following the French liberation of Alsace and Lorraine they sought to create not simply a loyal population in the lost provinces, but also one as free from German blood as was possible. Alsatians were classified as being French or not based on their descent rather than simply on residence and ID cards were issued based upon whether an individual had Alsatian parents, German parents, mixed parentage or was of another nationality entirely. Sometimes people appealed against their classification, and race was not the only consideration used in hearing their appeals. Indeed the most common reason for success was if they could prove that they or a close relative had served in the French army or the Foreign Legion, demonstrating again that military service on the French side could compensate for racial inferiority.⁵⁶⁰

The other most noticeable phenomenon about French attitudes towards the German nation is that despite all the abuse heaped on the German "barbarians", they were still

⁵⁵⁷ See p. 111.

⁵⁵⁸ Gibson, "Through French Eyes" p. 181, p. 186.

⁵⁵⁹ quoted in Sally Marks, "Black Watch on the Rhine: A Study in Propaganda, Prejudice and Prurience" in *European Studies Review* 13 (1983) p. 300.

⁵⁶⁰ Boswell, "From Liberation to Purge Trials", pp. 138-143. David Allen Harvey, "Lost Children or Enemy Aliens? Classifying the Population of Alsace after the First World War" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 34-4 (1999) p. 541, pp. 548-549

regarded as more advanced and more civilised than non-white “savages”. While the animosity and contempt towards the Germans was real and intense, it was not sufficient to overcome the greater conviction of white men’s superiority over non-whites.

CHAPTER 3 - World War One and Gender Relations

Both at the time of the Great War and in its immediate aftermath it was generally considered that the war had brought about a massive change in gender relations. By showing that women could take over male roles it was thought to have done more to emancipate women than years of feminist campaigning had been able to achieve.⁵⁶¹ However, recent historiography now offers a different orthodoxy, summed up by Christine Bard and Françoise Thébaud:

La guerre n'a pas émancipé les femmes. Dans les faits, elle a renforcé la hiérarchie entre les sexes, bouleversé les relations entre les hommes et femmes, brouillé les identités sexuelles, et ces d'autant plus que les uns et les autres ont vécu une chronologie différente du conflit.⁵⁶²

These arguments depend on several grounds, such as that the increase in female participation in the workforce has been exaggerated, that the war made men more hostile to feminism and women's rights, that the issue of depopulation hampered feminism, and that the war halted the momentum that women and the feminist movement had achieved.

It will be argued that in much of France concern over gender relations was peripheral during the war. While people commented on the various new roles taken on by women, they understood these modifications in traditional terms. Some new developments were believed to be temporary adjustments that would not continue long past the ceasefire; while others were downplayed as applying only to a small minority of women or just to Paris. In most cases, pre-war ideas of gender relations maintained their importance throughout the war, offering a framework within which the changes wrought by the war were understood.

⁵⁶¹ Thébaud, "The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division" p. 21.

⁵⁶² Christine Bard, Françoise Thébaud, "Les effets antiféministe de la Grande Guerre" in Christine Bard (ed.) *Un siècle d'antiféminisme*. Paris: Fayard (1999) p. 149.

Division Between Front and Rear

The division between the home front and the front line has often been posited as a source of hostility between men and women. The men risking their lives could only compare the experiences of the home front unfavourably. As Mary Louise Roberts writes “When soldiers returned from the front they saw their female kin, friends, and lovers assuming traditionally male jobs and family responsibilities ... The war generation of men found themselves buried alive in the trenches of death, at the same time that they witnessed the women in their lives enjoying unprecedented economic opportunities.”⁵⁶³ One infantryman wrote that “l’émancipation de la femme et la dislocation des familles font des étapes aussi rapides que l’avancée des Boches en territoire italien.”⁵⁶⁴ Soldiers were also upset at civilians’ lack of awareness of their suffering, and the perceived gaiety and luxury of the home front. Roberts and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau both produce ample examples of this.⁵⁶⁵ In the immensely popular novel *Le Feu*, which was lauded for its authenticity, Henri Barbusse famously wrote that the distinction between the front and the rear was “a difference far deeper than that of nations and with deeper trenches.”⁵⁶⁶ Not only was the rest of the population utterly incapable of comprehending the horror of trench warfare, which only those who had experienced it could truly understand, but also the propaganda and censorship that was considered necessary to maintain morale threw up another barrier. There are many examples of this divide, such as in this article that appeared in the trench newspaper, *Le Crapouillot*:

There was an announcement: “Views of the War”. Most of the civilians got up and left, grumbling, “The war again, what a bore”. While (on the screen) the soldiers mastered the dreadful “pig’s snout”, the audience doubled up with laughter. Perhaps they would not have found the exercise so funny if they had but once had to do it in feverish haste with bells ringing in the trenches to announce the arrival of the dreadful clouds of death ... The final film unrolled before us: “The battle-fields of the Marne”. The public seemed disappointed that such a terrible battle had left so little trace, and beside

⁵⁶³ Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 8.

⁵⁶⁴ Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 98. In passing, it is also notable that Italian military weakness has become proverbial.

⁵⁶⁵ Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914-1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1992)

⁵⁶⁶ Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, pp. 27-28.

me a little old lady, bored with such tranquil scenery, declared with a gentle little pout: “That’s boring: there aren’t even any bodies.”⁵⁶⁷

The question is whether the resentment and discontent felt by the soldiers led to any uncertainty in gender relations. Often the tirades launched against the home front were aimed more at the men perceived to be shirking, rather than women. In *Un Tel de l’armée française*, written in 1918, the soldier Franconi lambasted

Stratèges incohérents penchés sur des cartes dérisoires, généraux de plume et combien peu d’épée, maniant à la fois les sophismes les plus contradictoires et les armées, ancien insurgé déguisé en bon berger, tels furent nos amateurs de la guerre. Ils la firent dans les salles de rédaction, les salons académiques et les brasseries littéraires, alors que toute la jeunesse de France agonisait sur les nouveaux champs catalaniques.⁵⁶⁸

The perceived luxury of the conditions in the rear, whether enjoyed by women or men was a recurring theme in the complaints made by frontline soldiers, and particularly when exploitation of the troops was involved. This song from the front attacks rich shirkers, emphasising the contrast with life in the trenches.

Pendant que les heureux, les riches et les grands
reposent dans la soie et dans les fines toiles,
nous autres les parias, nous autres les errants,
ici dans les tranchées l’on se bat et l’on crève.⁵⁶⁹

In a letter Barbusse sent to *La Dépêche* he highlighted the worst abuses that his book had attacked: “la guerre suscite bien des égoïsmes et des cupidités. J’ai marqué quelques-uns de ces vices; j’ai parlé des embusqués, des profiteurs et des mercantis sans pitié.”⁵⁷⁰ The absence of any explicitly female role amongst the groups of abusers is striking. In his account of the Third Colonial Division during the war, General Puypéroux made little mention of women, when his troops rest behind the lines he mentioned only their costly living conditions, criticising those who sought to exploit the troops for material benefit. “[N]os braves troupiers s’extasient sur le bon

⁵⁶⁷ *Le Crapouillot*, August, 1917. Quoted in Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, p. 112.

⁵⁶⁸ quoted in Cruickshank, *Variations on a Catastrophe*, p. 70.

⁵⁶⁹ Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles: 1914-1918*, p. 58.

⁵⁷⁰ *La Dépêche*, 17 July, 1918.

marché de certains denrées, eux qui sont si exploités par les mercantis du front. Le résultat de cet étonnement ne se fait pas attendre longtemps... les prix augmentent de suite.”⁵⁷¹ Cazals and Rousseau argue that the trench journals directed their vitriol primarily at “des embusqués, des profiteurs, des journalistes bourreurs de crânes,”⁵⁷² In the songs of the trench journals the actions of the poilus were contrasted with the bourgeoisie rather than with women.⁵⁷³

It was also difficult to draw a simple line between front and rear that placed all shirkers in the rear. There were significant gradations of risk amongst combattants as the soldiers were well aware. The infantry were at far higher risk than cavalry and artillery. As one of the heroes of *Le Feu* commented, “Même au front on est toujours l’embusqué de quelqu’un.”⁵⁷⁴ In his memories of the war Jean Estève wrote about morale in 1917:

Noté en passant ce déplorable état d’esprit de l’artillerie, le plus mauvais sans doute de toutes les armées françaises, et d’autant plus extraordinaires que ces gens-là, surtout dans l’artillerie lourde, ont plutôt été des favorisés dans cette longue guerre.⁵⁷⁵

Other differences also existed amongst those at the front, based upon class and status. In Nancy in 1919 there was a meeting of working-class *mutilés* who had left the Association des Mutilés et Anciens Combattants. Marchand, the secretary of the new group, declared “En revenant des tranchées où quoiqu’on ait dit, il n’existait aucune fraternité entre combattants bourgeois et ouvriers, les patrons ont repris leur mentalité d’avant-guerre et traitent les ouvriers en conséquence.”⁵⁷⁶ Indeed, several veterans’ organisations, including the Union de Poilus did not admit officers into their membership.⁵⁷⁷

571 Puyperoux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale*, p. 79

572 Cazals and Rousseau, *14-18, le cri d’une génération*. p. 17.

573 e.g. Lacombe and Lacombe, *Les Chants de Bataille*, pp. 251-252, 254.

574 Françoise Thébaud, *La femme au temps de la guerre de 14*, Paris: Stock (1986), p. 201.

575 Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, pp. 117-118.

576 AN F/7/13243, 31 August, 1919. The groups full name was La Fédération Ouvrière des Mutilés et Reformés de Guerre, Veuves et Orphelins. Once again, the distinction is made on the dividing line of those who were victims of the war.

577 AN F/7/13243, 19 July, 1919.

Some critiques of the home front did attack women, but rarely as a primary target. This article by Captain Léon Hudelle, entitled *Le Poilu*, was published in several trench newspapers, as well as some left wing civilian papers.

Le poilu, ce n'est pas un secrétaire d'Etat-Major et d'Intendance, ni un automobiliste, mais c'est celui que tous les automobilistes et les secrétaires d'Etat-Major et d'Intendance regardent avec dédain, avec morgue, avec insolence, presque avec mépris.

Le Poilu, c'est celui que tout le monde admire, mais dont on s'écarte lorsqu'on le voit monter dans un train, rentrer dans un café, un restaurant, dans un magasin, de peur que ses brodequins mâchent les bottines, que ses effets maculent les vestons à la dernière mode, que ses gestes effleurent les robes cloches, que ses paroles sentent trop cru ...⁵⁷⁸

The first part is aimed at male shirkers, the second part more at women, but it is significant that the criticism is hardly accusing them of losing femininity; in fact the reverse is implied. Louis Barthas made a similar argument in his journal

On aurait bien voulu s'arrêter cantonner dans ces petites villes si tentantes avec leurs boutiques flambant neuf, leurs bistrots accueillants, leurs femmes avenantes et rieuses qui nous envoyaient des signes amicaux au passage mais ces lieux étaient trop beaux pour nous, on les réservait aux embusqués de toute catégorie qui pullulaient à l'arrière.⁵⁷⁹

When women were criticised it was often for the fault, traditionally seen as female, of living above their station. A song recorded in the journal of Antoine Bosc similarly accuses women of not taking the war seriously. "Elles rigolent des communiqués", while they live the high life, but once again their role is entirely traditional. The song is made more powerful by focusing its attack on the wives of the poilus, often exempted from more general criticism of the rear.

"Les petites femmes des mobilisés"

Les poilus s'en vont, le cafard au front,

Trottinant parmi les cervelles.

A l'arrière l'on voit la gaieté, la joie,

⁵⁷⁸ Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, p. 59.

⁵⁷⁹ Frédéric Rousseau, *La guerre censurée: Une histoire des combattants européens de 1914-1918*. Paris: Seuil (1999) p. 264.

Et la guerre, nul ne s'en aperçoit.

Concerts, cinéma, casino,
Tout pleins de badaud
Qui ont la vie belle.

Nos femmes s'offrent du plaisir,
Elles peuvent s'offrir ce qui leur fait plaisir,
Elles rigolent des communiqués,
Les petites femmes des mobilisés.⁵⁸⁰

This criticism echoes the criticism earlier in *Le Crapouillot* by emphasising not just the easy living standards of those at home compared to the trenches, but the added indecency of the privileged finding the war a source of amusement. The home front was expected to be suffering, and those who were not obviously doing so were harshly criticised.

This theme is also illustrated by the criticism of the population of Châlons sur-Marne by Barthes.

Grande animation dans la rues, les embusqués avaient mis leurs képis les plus nerfs, leurs galons, leurs chevrons les plus étincelants. La plupart avaient à leur bras leur femme ou une femme avec des chapeaux fleuris, des corsages, des robes aux couleurs chatoyantes; tout ce beau monde se promenait, souriait, jasait, flirtait dans une inconscience, une quiétude parfaites.⁵⁸¹

The majority of the actions described are not objectionable in themselves, it is only in the context of the war that fine clothes and shallow pleasures are unacceptable. The last words are the most significant, what is most damning is the lack of awareness of the ordeal of the troops. The criticism of women in the trench journal *La Marmite* in 1916 followed a similar line, castigating the shallowness of women.

La femme a commis certaines fautes de légèreté, d'insouciance, et les jupes de 1916 ont un peu trop l'air de se ficher de tout. La femme n'a pas toujours élevé son âme jusqu'à la compréhension de l'héroïsme et j'en ai connu en permission qui, avec un angélique sourire à gifler, me disaient en parlant des combats de nuit: 'Comme ce doit être amusant!' D'autres ne pouvaient souffrir le mot de 'poilu' et se pâmaient devant les mentons imberbes des Anglais. Tout cela déconcerte le soldat et il en conçoit

580 Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, pp. 59-60.

581 Rousseau, *La guerre censurée*, p. 264.

une certaine pitié méprisante pour la femme. Les exceptions sont nombreuses, je me hâte de le dire; mais elles ne font que confirmer la règle.⁵⁸²

The contemptuous pity the soldiers are claimed to feel for women appears to be based on women having fallen victim to the traditional vices of their sex rather than any challenging of gender roles.

This sort of criticisms recur repeatedly. When *La Dépêche* criticised the spring fashions in 1916 it argued that these fashions were not new and normally would be cause for amusement. Only because of the terrible circumstances that France found itself in did they become shocking and unacceptable.⁵⁸³ The contrôleur of the agricultural workforce in Anjou observed in November 1918, and again in 1919, that the workers leaving the countryside towards the town, in particular the women were “attirée par un vie plus facile, la toilette et les plaisirs variés.”⁵⁸⁴ For Margaret Darrow, the example of feminine fashions is an instance where women’s activities could be read in differing ways. Was their wearing new and elegant clothing a signal of indifference to the sufferings of the front, or was it a proud statement that the natural grace of French women should not be destroyed?⁵⁸⁵ Certainly André Kahn responded positively at the front to news that Paris was returning to normal in December 1914. “C’est un honneur pour Poincaré et pour ses hommes du gouvernement que cette résurrection de la France en pleine guerre. Cela doit bigrement étonner les Boches ...”⁵⁸⁶

When the home front was portrayed as wholly feminine, women were often displayed in a sympathetic, traditional role. An article by Jean Longuet in *Le Populaire* depicted “Les couloirs du Palais de Justice retentissent sans cesse des cris déchirants, des hurlements, des malheureuses femmes dont les maris, les fils, ou les pères viennent d’être frappés de condamnations féroces.” It is not just wives, but mothers and

582 quoted in Lacombe and Lacombe, *Les Chants de Bataille*, p. 236.

583 *La Dépêche*, 18 January, 1916.

584 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 303.

585 Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front*. Oxford, New York: Berg (2000), pp. 69-71.

586 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, p. 82.

daughters who are crying and wailing, but it appears that there are no fathers or sons there displaying their anger and grief.⁵⁸⁷

La Bataille regularly castigated male profiteers in its cartoons but rarely women. Even in a rare example depicting a woman profiting from the war, a female also supplies justice; a proletarian woman strangling a bourgeois lady with her own expensive necklace.⁵⁸⁸ *Le Populaire* followed a similar line to the *Bataille* with a cartoon from April 1918 depicting a fat, middle-aged, male employer, criticising a young female worker for wanting to leave work at six in the evening.⁵⁸⁹ Georges Villard in the trench journal *Plus que Toral* in 1916 wrote a song that included the phrase:

“En pensant à la femme, en pensant aux enfants,
Qui vivent angoissés dans la maison muette,”⁵⁹⁰

Much more gender specific was the issue of sexual infidelity. Mary Roberts argues convincingly that men at the front lived in fear of being betrayed by their spouses. Roberts goes further though by arguing that “Sexual infidelity signified the wartime reversal of gender roles because in this case, women were free and promiscuous, while men were “confined” to the army and trenches ... female infidelity symbolized the isolation, alienation, and emasculation of the male combattant.”⁵⁹¹ As has already been noted, there can be no contesting that men fighting in the trenches felt alienated and isolated from the rest of society. However the argument that the war and female infidelity resulted in a feeling of emasculation among soldiers is more problematic.

War has traditionally been portrayed as embodying the epitome of masculinity, and hence virility, and at the start of the Great War, it proved no exception. From August 1914 into 1915 the war was portrayed in Britain as resulting in reinvigorating a

587 AN F/12/8024.

588 *La Bataille*, 4 August, 1916.

589 Jean-Louis Robert, “The image of the profiteer” in Jay Winter, Jean-Louis Robert (eds.) *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin. 1914-1919*. New York: Cambridge University Press (1997) p. 119.

590 Lacombe and Lacombe, *Les Chants de Bataille*, pp.245-246 See also Englander, “The French Soldier. 1914-18” pp. 61-63.

degenerate and effeminate pre-war culture amongst men, with women similarly refeminized.⁵⁹² The French reaction was similar. In August 1914, René Bazin wrote in his *cahiers intimes*,

“J’entends le dialogue des officiers allemands rentrant dans leur positions d’où on les avait lancés en avant:

- Vous n’avez pu tenir?
- Non, un élan terrible, des troupes comme celles de Napoléon, des armées mieux maniées que les nôtres...
- Et le désordre ?
- Pas
- Et l’insubordination?
- Finie
- Et l’affaiblissement de la race?
- Mensonge!
- La France agonisante?
- Allez-y voir!”⁵⁹³

The war had given the lie to the idea of *l’affaiblissement de la race*. The reference to the Napoleonic army is also significant; these soldiers are just as glorious (and by implication the war is too).

The argument is that while previous wars had allowed men to display heroism through acts of personal bravery and virile attacks, the Great War was different, men were powerless against the shells and machine guns, heroism was achieved purely through survival. Jean Norton Cru gives a striking account of this.

Entre deux groupements plus petits, comme entre deux individus, il n’y a plus de lutte, sauf dans des cas très exceptionnels: presque toujours l’un des deux frappe, l’autre ne peut que courber le dos et recevoir les coups.

591 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes* pp. 37-38.

592 Susan Kingsley Kent, “Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918” in F. Coetzee and M. Shevin-Coetzee (eds.), *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1995) p. 156.

593 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 48.

The French infantry could only take cover against the German trench artillery, which was impotent against the French 75s, which were in turn powerless to retaliate against German heavy artillery.

Les soldats sont bourreaux ou victimes, chasseurs ou proie, et dans l'infanterie nous avons l'impression que nous jouâmes la plupart du temps le rôle de victime, de proie, de cible. Ce rôle ne tend guère à faire goûter la gloire des combats.⁵⁹⁴

While the scale of this suffering was undoubtedly unprecedented in the First World War, the experience of war bringing death without possibility for heroism was not entirely new. Dr Samuel Johnson had given a significantly similar description to the experience of soldiers fighting nearly 150 years earlier.

The life of a modern soldier is ill-represented by heroick fiction. War has means of destruction more formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thousands and ten thousands, that perished in our late contests with France and Spain, a very small part ever felt the stroke of an enemy; the rest languished in tents and ships, amidst damps and putrefaction; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men, made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery, and whelmed in pits, or heaved into the ocean, without notice and without remembrance. By incommensurable encampments and unwholesome stations, where courage is useless, and enterprise unpracticable, fleets are silently dispeopled, and armies sluggishly melted away.⁵⁹⁵

There are certainly plenty of examples of veterans lambasting the dehumanising quality of trench warfare. In *Le Feu*, a soldier, Bertrand: "Honte à la gloire militaire, honte aux armées, honte au métier de soldat, qui change les hommes tour à tour en stupides victimes et en ignobles bourreaux."⁵⁹⁶ Jacques Rivière writing in 1921 asked "Je demande à tous les combattants ... s'ils n'ont pas la sensation d'avoir été amputés de toute une partie de leur sensibilité. Nous reviens mais nous ne sommes plus les

594 Jean Norton Cru, in Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, pp.50-51. See also Sherman, "Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity" and Leonard Smith, "Masculinity, Memory, and the French World War I Novel: Henri Barbusse and Roland Dorgelès" in F. Coetzee and M. Shevin-Coetzee (eds.), *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1995) pp. 251-273.

595 Samuel Johnson, *Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland's Islands* (1771) [WWW] <http://www.samueljohnson.com/falklands.html> [Accessed 31 October 2003]

596 Cruickshank, *Variations on a Catastrophe* p. 53.

mêmes.”⁵⁹⁷ According to Antoine Prost: “Le soldat est un homme que la guerre déshumanise.”⁵⁹⁸

Yet all these references suggest not a loss of virility, but of basic humanity. Furthermore, the surviving of the war seems to have been considered as having passed a test, of being proven. Antoine Prost’s major study of war veterans suggests that the men did not come out of the war feeling emasculated or in need to prove themselves. On the contrary they felt that, terrible though their experiences had been, they had at least gained pride in the fact that they had not been found wanting. The rhetoric of *anciens combattants* throughout the interwar period is filled with examples of where they assert that they have proven themselves worthy.⁵⁹⁹ Writers of such different persuasions as Montherlant and Drieu la Rochelle both expressed nostalgia for the “virile fraternity” of the front.⁶⁰⁰

The post war activity of veterans also contradicts the idea that they were desperate to forget the war entirely. The vast majority joined organisations of *Anciens Combattants*, for social activities as well as for campaigning. Holt’s study of sporting activity in France shows that the war resulted in acceleration in numbers participating in shooting. In 1870 there were 300,000 registered participants, which grew to 600,000 by 1914. In the 1920s there were more than one million participants, and by 1930 there were 1.8 million.⁶⁰¹ It is reasonable to assume that a significant proportion of these newcomers were veterans, who were not put off by any military associations.

The virility of the soldiers was also constantly eulogised by non-combattants. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau’s study of children’s literature featured several “...histoires développent le thème du héros qui, par sa modestie et son héroïsme,

597 Annette Becker, *La Guerre et la Foi: de la mort à la mémoire 1914-1930*, Paris: Armand Collin (1994) p. 103.

598 Antoine Prost “Les Représentations de la Guerre dans la culture française de l’entre-deux-guerres.” *Vingtième Siècle* 41 (Jan-Mar 1994) p. 29.

599 Antoine Prost, *Les anciens combattants et la société française, 1914-1939* (3 vols.) Paris : Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, (1977).

600 Cruickshank, *Variations on a Catastrophe*, p. 78.

601 Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, Hamden, CT: Archon Books, (1981) p.22. After 1930, numbers levelled off.

conquiert le coeur d'une femme logiquement inaccessible."⁶⁰² There were a series of postcards during the war entitled "Graine de Poilu". One depicted an enfant bursting out of his shell, armed with rifle and bayonet and asking "Y en a-t-il encore des Boches?" Not all French children would be heroic, just the sons of the soldiers.⁶⁰³ Furthermore, as Audoin-Rouzeau notes, the representation of combattants stressed defence of their soil, defence of their country, but most strongly of all defence of their women and children.⁶⁰⁴

In C. Binet-Sanglé's book *Le Haras humain* published in 1918, he described his wish to regenerate the race. His ideal masculine type seemed closely based upon the popular image of the soldier: "hommes musclés, poilus, barbus, à gros testicules, à scrotum ferme, à sperme épais". Women were expected to have a traditional feminine form, with broad hips and large breasts.⁶⁰⁵ Even those non-combatants who witnessed the suffering first hand were positive about the link between virility and frontline combat. The influential psychologist Dr Dide, who worked for some time at the front, wrote in 1916:

L'acte génital tend à assurer la perpétuation de la race et le guerrier, dans sa force abstraite, se surpasse, animé qu'il est des forces de la destinée: Il n'est plus un homme, il symbolise le droit au soleil d'un peuple, le besoin de vie d'un nation, il devient synthèse de la patrie elle-même qui veut persévérer dans son être.⁶⁰⁶

Hélène Dequidt has noted that those men serving in frontline medical services found their masculinity in question both by the soldiers, and also by themselves, and many sought to be transferred to frontline combat. Similarly those attending to the wounded at the rear wished they were in the frontline of the battle against death.⁶⁰⁷ An indication of the views of the wounded themselves was given by M.Simon, chairing a

602 Audoin-Rouzeau, *La Guerre des Enfants* p. 76.

603 Audoin-Rouzeau, *La Guerre des Enfants* between pp.128-129. See also Huss, *Histoires de la Famille*, pp. 166-183.

604 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Combattre*, Amiens: Centre Régional de Documentation Pédagogique de Picardie (1985) p. 80.

605 Carol, *Histoire de l'Eugenisme en France*, p. 151.

606 Françaises Jacob, "L'Asile d'aliénés de Braqueville (Haute-Garonne) pendant la guerre de 1914: un exemple des mutations de la psychiatrie française," in *Annales du Midi* 103 - 96 (1991) p. 493.

607 Hélène Dequidt, "La crise d'identité du monde médical français en 14-18." in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 175 - July (1994) pp. 87-101.

meeting organised by the *Journal des mutilés* to form a federation of all associations of *anciens combattants* in November 1917. “Je salue ensuite nos chers camarades restés au front et qui continuent la tâche rude et sublime de protéger les foyers que nous ne pouvons plus défendre.”⁶⁰⁸ Not only did Simon laud the sublime nature of the task, it was placed squarely within the traditional setting of the man defending the home.

If it is difficult to say that the war resulted directly in the symbolic emasculation of the male combatant, the argument that this was achieved indirectly - through female sexual infidelity - is stronger. There is no doubt that there was an increase in sex outside of marriage, illegitimate births rose significantly.⁶⁰⁹ For those whose wives and fiancées left them, this would clearly have been distressing, as would be the situation for those who stayed with their partners, knowing or suspecting that they had been unfaithful, perhaps unsure about the paternity of a child. In 1918, an article in *Le Courier du Centre* began: “Un drame passionnel - ils sont déjà nombreux depuis la guerre...” It described how a soldier, Yves Beauffenie, killed Jean Pestis, who up until recently had been in the same regiment, because Pestis was having an affair with his wife.⁶¹⁰

One of the letters from the front recorded by Jean Nicot identified three types of people who aroused resentment at the front.

... des industriels que la guerre enrichit, ensuite ce sont les vieillards, anciens combattants de 1870 qui n'ont personne au front et parlent patriotisme, enfin, en troisième lieu, ce sont des femmes que je ne veux pas qualifier et dont les maris sont au front et qui ont près d'elles des amants recrutés parmi les embusqués ou des jeunes gens imberbes.⁶¹¹

608 AN F/7/13243, 12th November, 1917.

609 It should be noted however that this was not setting a trend that was to follow after the war. Illegitimate births per 100 between 1866-1875 were 7.4; between 1896-1905, 8.8; and between 1926-1935, 7.9. Patrick Festy, *La fécondité des pays occidentaux de 1870 à 1970*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (1979) p. 68.

610 *Le Courier du Centre*, 10 February, 1918.

611 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 89.

These unfaithful wives were implicitly contrasted with women mentioned earlier in the letter - “Des femmes en grand deuil qu’on croise dans la rue pleurent en regardant les poilus du front”.⁶¹²

Female infidelity was not typically portrayed as a sign of assertiveness. In the novel Daniel Sherman analyses, *La joie* by Maurice Genevoix, Genevoix describes the feelings of Pierre, the hero, about the *embusqué* who had an affair with his girlfriend. “Pendant que je me battais, pendant que je grelottais en Bochie, ce monsieur s’installait chez vous, n’en bougeait plus”. Here the entire agency in the affair is assigned to the man, who wouldn’t leave, without any impression of a wartime reversal of gender roles.⁶¹³ This is backed up by some of the trench journals studied by Audoin-Rouzeau. In this extract it is assumed that if women are wearing jewellery then it must have been men who were responsible for buying it. In addition, the changes it notes are all of appearance, not of character:

At last he reaches the village ... He meets some country women. Oh, but how they’ve changed! No more clogs, no more apron: smart polished boots, jewellery! As the poilu says to himself: “Are there still men at the rear, to pay for all these fine things”.⁶¹⁴

Even more explicit, the following extract seems to absolve women from all responsibility for initiating infidelity, putting all the blame on the men at the rear.

How cowardly they seem to me, those men who are comfortably settled at the rear and who try to profit from the current difficult circumstances by disturbing the noble and dignified solitude of women deprived of their loved ones and their support. I cannot think of any more base or vile crime than that! While others, out there are getting shot or lie bleeding in a hospital bed, those men whose privileged position should impose on them at least a polite reserve roam like wolves round homes where the head of the household is absent. Yes there are roaming wolves.⁶¹⁵

The difficulties involved in attributing division between the sexes to combat are also highlighted by a quote made by a railwayman: “women no longer want to obey ... we

612 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 89.

613 Sherman “Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity” p. 87.

614 *Le cri du boyau*, September-October, 1916 in Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War: 1914-1918* p. 131.

615 *La Gazette du crénau*. November, 1918, in Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War: 1914-1918* p. 132.

talk about marriage between men and women as people talk of peace between the Boches and the French.”⁶¹⁶ A man in a reserved occupation made this comment; not someone who had fought on the front line, his use of “we” suggests he knew others who shared his thinking.

Civilian testimony was more often inclined to assign blame to women. Emile Rethault wrote in 1970 on the consequences of the war in the commune where he would become mayor. He believed that the departure of the vast majority of adult males meant that “L’autorité interne tomba en quenouille...”⁶¹⁷ Similarly, on the subject of extra-marital affairs, Gilles Depérier denounced “les mauvais exemples, trop humains, donnés par quelques mauvais esprits, surtout féminins.”⁶¹⁸ Dr Vernédal in his doctoral thesis claimed that prostitution has many more adherents: “avidés surtout de plaisir, mais plus souvent de luxe et de gain” in the difficult financial times during the war.⁶¹⁹

One pitfall it is crucial to avoid is conflating the lifestyles of Parisian women and the responses that these lifestyles prompted with that of French women as a whole. Maurice Donnay noted this phenomenon during the war, claiming that foreigners have been prone to judge France by Paris, French women by Parisian women and Parisian women by “certaines Parisiennes agitées”.⁶²⁰ Certain criticisms by the French of the moral conduct of women were Paris specific. Louis Barthas for instance had direct criticism to make of some women in Paris:

Par exemple, je fus choqué de la tenue de certaines Parisiennes. Appartenaient-elles au grand monde? au demi-monde? Je l’ignorais. Décolletées, ‘démolletées’, bras nus, épaules nues, elles semblaient avoir le seul souci de plaire, de se faire remarquer, attirer le regard, aiguïser les désirs des passants et cela au moment où l’angoisse étreignait tant de cœurs, où tant d’yeux pleuraient, tant de sang coulait, où se jouait le destin de la France, de l’Europe... et même du monde!⁶²¹

616 Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945, Vol.1, Ambition, love and politics*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, (1973) p. 351.

617 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 293.

618 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 303.

619 Vernédal, *L’Enfant de la Guerre a Toulouse*, p. 35

620 Maurice Donnay’s preface to Mme Paul Alexandra Mellor, *Pages Inédites sur La Femme et la Guerre*. Paris: Devambez (1916). p. 15.

The postcard mentioned earlier of a woman lifting up her skirt to the admiring glances of foreign soldiers was specifically described as an “Attraction Parisiennes”. Rosny and Mille were both quoted in the last chapter making a distinction between the relationships amongst women and Americans in the big cities and those elsewhere.⁶²² The presumed sexual behaviour of Parisian women also informed André Kahn’s dismissal of the strikes of 1917, as well as ideas of female irrationality.

Quant aux manifestations hystériques des ouvrières parisiennes, encore une fois, je les considère sans le moindre importance. Elles s’agitent parce que les printemps les énerve et qu’elles ne trouvent pas assez d’hommes pour le satisfaire.⁶²³

The extent to which the mores of the capital, and particularly the Parisian elite, were seen to differ from that of those who lived in provincial cities, is highlighted by an article in *La Libre Parole* in September 1914 on the changes wrought by the governmental move to Bordeaux.

Il paraît que l’on ne s’ennuie pas à Bordeaux pendant que nos soldats défendent la France sur les champs de bataille, à deux pas de nous, au prix de leur sang. Tandis que la population parisienne, épurée de ses politiciens arrivistes et de ses jouisseurs névrosés, conserve dans sa calme vaillance une bonne humeur pleine de dignité, tous nos histrions, nos bateleurs, nos amuseurs et amuseuses, tous les habitués des restaurants de nuit se sont transportés à Bordeaux, où ils ont trouvé dans les coulisses gouvernementales une clientèle toute disposée à se mettre à l’unisson. On y joue la comédie, on y sable le champagne en aimable compagnie, on cherche à se remonter artificiellement un moral qui avait été un peu ébranlé lors de l’exode... Souhaitons que les colonisateurs actuel de Bordeaux fassent enfin un retour sur eux-mêmes et songent un peu plus aux épreuves que traverse la patrie.⁶²⁴

It wasn’t just the lifestyle of the Parisians that was distinguished from that of the Bordelais, it was that they were doing so while the men from the region, “nos soldats”, were sacrificing their blood for France.

It must also be remembered that the relationship between front and rear was far from being wholly antagonistic. There were close relationships between soldiers and their

621 Rousseau, *La guerre censurée*, p. 265.

622 Huss, *Histoires de famille* pp. 208-209, *La Dépêche*, 30 July, 1918 See pp. 127-128.

623 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, p. 275.

families and friends that were maintained by letters and postcards.⁶²⁵ Awareness of the suffering of their loved ones must have reminded soldiers that they were not unique. André Kahn demonstrated this in writing to his wife “Tu n’es pas la seule à en souffrir. J’imagine que toutes les femmes de France en sont au même point, ne rêvent qu’au même avenir...”⁶²⁶ When Paris was bombed, soldiers did not celebrate the jolt to the profiteers of the home front, but criticised the cruelty of the Germans as murderers of the innocent. “Que nous nous battions entre hommes, je trouve ce moyen assez légal. Mais d’aller tuer les vieillards, les femmes et les enfants, c’est ignoble.”⁶²⁷

There were also the nurses and the marraines. In both these examples soldiers would have close contact with women in positive, traditional roles. The marraines, or godmothers, were women who offered both moral support and presents to soldiers at the front, particularly those without families of their own. The role of marraines offered women the chance to give support to men at the front in a traditionally feminine role and newspapers regularly encouraged more women to contribute. *La Bataille* urged, “Encore toujours plus de marraines! Les vieilles femmes, les petites filles! Toutes, pour nous chers camarades solitaires et tristes, à qui nous devons un peu de joie et d’affection.”⁶²⁸ Nearly 3 million soldiers were hospitalised during the war, more than half of them at least twice, plus those who were afflicted by illness. Female nurses would have attended all of these.⁶²⁹ One of the extracts from *Gaspard* by René Benjamin that was printed in *La Petite Gironde* painted a glowing picture of nurses.⁶³⁰ The same newspaper also printed a description by a soldier from the region, Leo Larguier, describing being hospitalised for his wounds.

Un arrêt, et des quatre coins de la gare sur le quai désert, s’essaient les dames et les demoiselles de la Croix-Rouge. Je ne rêve pas. Ce sont bien des anges qui apportent des corbeilles... Des souliers de

624 G. Dupeux, “Bordeaux pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale” in Joseph Lajugie ed. *Bordeaux au XXe Siècle*. Bordeaux: Fédération historique du Sud-Ouest (1972) pp. 10-11.

625 See for example Huss, *Histoires de famille* pp. 92-113.

626 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, p. 263.

627 Nicot, *Les Poilus ont la parole*, p. 307.

628 *La Bataille*, 4 January, 1916.

629 Thébaud, *La femme au temps de la guerre de 14*, p.84. See also Margaret H. Darrow, *French Volunteer Nursing and the Myth of War Experience in World War I* in *The American Historical Review*, 101-1. (1996), pp. 80-106.

630 *La Petite Gironde*, 9 January, 1916.

velours sur les marchepieds, des mains fines, des sourires frais et des yeux qui rient, des voix de miracle et des blancheurs de paradis; tout cela pour de vieux poilus brisés qui n'ont fait que leur devoir. C'est trop, nous sommes confus, et nul n'aurait osé imaginer cet accueil, et nous nous estimons payés au centuple [...] Sur le fond sanglant de la guerre, pour les bons poilus meurtris, elles se détachent en voiles blancs et elles demeurent de petites figures françaises, avec leur grâce légère et leur goût charmant.⁶³¹

Larguier doesn't just appreciate the care given by the nurses of the Red Cross, it's their very femininity that is stressed – their soft hands, their fresh smiles, their grace and charm – as salving the pain of the bloody war.

Jean Hugo spoke of “une très jeune infirmière d'une beauté céleste, accompagnée par son grand-père, un vieux gentilhomme à moustache blanche: elle nous servit gravement du café, en silence et sans sourire.”⁶³² General Puypéroux paid homage to a nurse who worked on the front with his division. He claimed she would be remembered by all the soldiers as “la personnification de la bravoure féminine et du dévouement désintéressé.”⁶³³ Pierre Mille described how nurses were initially reluctant to treat German prisoners who had been trying to kill their husbands or brothers, but when it was pointed out to them what might happen if German nurses took the same approach they realised what was necessary. “Elles se sont dévouées corps et âme et bientôt, d'ailleurs, l'instinct de maternité et de pitié qui est au cœur de toutes les femmes a triomphé chez elles de tout autre sentiment.”⁶³⁴ While Mille was writing to praise the nurses, his description implicitly stresses the dominance of sentimentality and instinct above reason and rationality in the actions of these women.

While those who participated in nursing were widely praised, their role was not considered to warrant parity with the men at front in terms of privileges. A circular from the war ministry stated “le bénéfice de la franchise postale militaire s'applique exclusivement aux militaires et marins mobilisés, et qu'en aucun cas, le personnel féminin employé dans les services et établissements militaires ne peut bénéficier de

631 *La Petite Gironde*, 1 February, 1916.

632 Rousseau, *La guerre censurée*, p. 251.

633 Puypéroux, *La 3^{me} Division Coloniale* p. 167

634 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 23 October, 1914.

cette franchise.⁶³⁵ Furthermore, the worth of the nurses' service was valued so highly because of the reflected glory from those they treated. This is illustrated by the monument to war-time nurses at Berck-Plage, which features not a nurse but a wounded soldier on a stretcher.⁶³⁶

There was also leave from the front. While some soldiers found civil society insensitive, others reacted positively. The memoirs of Marius Hourtal contain a long passage describing a leave, where the entire trip is described positively, except for a difficult meeting with the mother of a war victim.⁶³⁷ He gave several examples of consideration being shown towards him and his companions. They were granted free admission to various Parisian attractions as they were recognised as permissionaires who had come straight from the front line. On the trip to his village his train was full and he began to fall asleep in the corridor until an old lady gently took his arm and insisted on giving him her seat, despite his attempts to refuse. At the same time his comrades were lying down all along the corridor, but the conductor didn't wake them, understanding they were exhausted. Later another conductor stamped their passes so as to give them an extra day's leave. Finally he arrived at his home, where he was warmly welcomed by his family "Puis ce fut la tournée des voisins et amis du village, car tout le monde voulait me voir."⁶³⁸ A soldier told the *Petit Parisien* that he didn't need to read patriotic exhortations from the rear, but that leave was welcome. "Let them double our wine, brandy, and also leaves and not brainwash us with that claptrap".⁶³⁹ For Octave Clauson, his enjoyment was in seeing his family, and the suspension of leave was a major blow. But there was a downside, with people saying to him on every leave "Tu es déjà là!" and also the sense that life back home was moving on without him.⁶⁴⁰

635 AN F/12/7999, 1 November, 1916.

636 Luc Capdevila, François Rouquet, Fabrice Virgili, Danièle Voldman, *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre 1914-1945*. Paris: Payot (2003) p. 72

637 Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, p. 67.

638 Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, pp. 64-67.

639 Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1997) p. 23.

640 Cazals *et al*, *Années Cruelles*, pp. 118-119.

It appears that there was a close correlation between the morale of the troops and their reaction to civil society. In the winter of 1915-1916, the prefect of Anjou reported to the Interior Ministry that

Les visites des permissionnaires continuent à produire dans l'ensemble leur action bienfaisante. La très grande majorité [...] fait impression par leur bonne santé physique et morale, leur bonne humeur, leur courage, leur résolution, leur assurance dans le succès final qu'ils annoncent généralement comme prochain.⁶⁴¹

At roughly same time, the sub-prefect of Cholet believed of soldiers that "leur confiance dans son issue [the end of the war] gagnent les plus indécis, les plus enclins au découragement."⁶⁴²

However in 1917 the situation was reversed; the soldiers were depressed and made no secret of it. According to the prefect "Ceux-ci apportent depuis quelque temps du front un état d'esprit extrêmement fâcheux et exercent autour d'eux une influence délétère. Les effets de cette influence se font ressentir partout et ont beaucoup contribué à la dépression qui s'est produite dans toute les milieux..."⁶⁴³ It may be no coincidence that Hourtal's account was of a leave taken in 1916, while Clauson only arrived at the front in 1917.

The post-war rhetoric of the veterans' organisations testifies to a more subtle distinction than simply a dichotomy of frontline service and home front fecklessness. Instead, distinctions were made in terms of perceived sacrifice. Thus when, in 1919 at a meeting of the *Union des Poilus* in Toulon, the order of a cortege was decided, it was headed by *mutilés*, then the war widows, and finally the *poilus*.⁶⁴⁴ Several organisations, such as the mutual society *La Gallieni*, had memberships made up of war widows and war wounded. Nor were the interests of widows considered to be necessarily less important. At a meeting in Rennes in 1919, made up in equal parts of war wounded and widowed women, the first two complaints it made were "Contre le licenciement des veuves de guerre employées dans l'Administrations publique et les

641 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, pp. 64-65.

642 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 65.

643 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 65.

Arsenaux.” and “Contre le non-emploi des veuves de guerre qui devenues chefs de famille du fait de la mort de leurs maris, ont acquis une priorité sacrée dans le droit au travail”. Only then did it move on to various complaints about the treatment of *mutilés*.⁶⁴⁵ When, in 1924, M. Felix of the Fédération ouvrière et paysanne des Mutilés organised a demonstration for the 16th of November, he disassociated it from the 11th of November celebrations because he believed that they were being run by the Bloc National which “n’étaient pas qualifiés”. However he did believe that an association of war widows was sufficiently qualified to organise the demonstration with.⁶⁴⁶ When there was a national congress of *mutilés* in 1919, it attempted to agree a “programme minimum des combattants”. This mainly consisted of ensuring the employment of the wounded. It was agreed that “tout ce qui a été des mutilés s’appliquera également aux veuves [de guerre]”⁶⁴⁷ Similarly, at a meeting of veterans in the Hautes-Pyrénées the president, M. Maumus, complained that in certain industries “dont les meilleures places ont été pris par ceux qui sont restés à l’arrière.” His next complaint was about the dismissal of war widows from their place of employment.⁶⁴⁸ The conference of the Union nationale des mutilés in April 1919, called for “le droit de vote et l’éligibilité à tous les degrés pour les veuves de guerre”⁶⁴⁹

Thus, when these groups campaigned, their opposition was not to women taking the jobs of men, but more specifically those who had not suffered during the conflict denying employment to those who had sacrificed a limb or a husband. At a meeting of *La Gallieni* in May 1919, a M. Richard criticised the 15th arrondissement for “a renvoyé tout récemment 4 démobilisés qu’elle occupait, et conserve dans ses bureaux une vingtaine de jeunes filles qui n’ont rien perdu à la guerre, sont dans leur familles, et ne travaillent, selon leurs dires, que pour la voilette et leurs gants”. Richard argued it was necessary to signal such abuses to the public.⁶⁵⁰ During a meeting of the

644 AN F/7/13243, 10 July, 1919.

645 AN F/7/13243, 15 June, 1919.

646 AN F/7/13243, 6 December, 1924.

647 AN F/7/13243, 23 April, 1919.

648 AN F/7/13243, 16 June, 1919.

649 *La Petite Gironde*, 24 April, 1919.

650 AN F/7/13243, 19 May, 1919. Interestingly, this was portrayed not as a sign of public indifference to veterans, but administrative indifference. It was believed that if such abuses were indicated to the public then they would support the veterans.

Association amicale des mutilés, réformés et anciens combattants in 1920 a man called Davillers neatly encapsulated several of the veteran movement's grievances in demanding that "... dans les diverses administrations, les emplois sédentaires soient réservés aux veuves, aux mutilés, et non à femmes paraissent de mœurs légères, comme il s'en trouve au Ministère des pensions."⁶⁵¹ Morality and sacrifice were linked as inextricably as immorality and exploitation of the war.

Indeed the resentment of those who had fought for France may have been more developed by their treatment after the war. A poster entitled "Ceux qu'on Oublie!" drew attention to the adulation heaped on the veterans in 1918, and their subsequent neglect.

1918 "C'est la Gloire! la Victoire! l'Enthousiasme des foules! l'Elan vers les Héros!... Ce sont des promesses, l'assurance qu'elles seront tenues et que pas un seul de tous nos droits ne sera méconnu...

1922 "Quatre ans d'indifférence! les couronnes de lauriers devenues couronnes d'épines,"⁶⁵²

Further down, the poster asserted that "Malgré la bonne volonté du Ministre des Pensions, l'Administration continue sa lutte contre les Mutilés..."⁶⁵³

In 1919, the 14th of July celebrations in Bordeaux saw the places reserved for the victims of the war occupied by a mass of people, and they were unable to join in the celebrations.⁶⁵⁴ The Association des mutilés et anciens combattants de Montpellier demanded that "les mutilés ne soient pas relégués à la fin du cortège comme les années précédentes, car ils estiment que leur place est en tête de cortège" for the 11th of November procession in 1919.⁶⁵⁵ Again though, as Monique Luirard notes, the anger of the former soldiers in the post war period was largely directed at the male exploiters of the war, politicians, profiteers and shirkers.⁶⁵⁶

651 AN F/7/13243, 4 April 1920.

652 AN F/7/13243.

653 AN F/7/13243.

654 AN F/7/13243, 15 July, 1919.

655 AN F/7/13243, 15 October, 1919.

656 Monique Luirard, *La France et ses morts; Les monuments commémoratifs dans la Loire*. St Etienne: Centre interdisciplinaire d'études et de recherches sur les structures régionales (1977) pp. 74-76.

The Impact of the War

Christine Bard argues that the war halted the momentum of feminist campaigning, “Nombre de changements dans la vie des femmes trop hâtivement attribués à la guerre se sont en réalité produits à la Belle Epoque. Dans la littérature apparaît, alors une “femme nouvelle”, libre, indépendante, revolt, en un mot, féministe.”⁶⁵⁷ Bard is correct to say that the “femme nouvelle” was a popular image in the Belle Epoque, as indeed it has been in several contemporary epochs. However, as Roberts has shown with her study of the post war “femme moderne” the existence of liberated, independent, feminist women was not in itself sufficient to create significant changes in the position of women as a whole. While there was some pre-war emancipation - in 1907 married women gained the right to their own earnings, and in 1912 the right to bring paternity suits - this was little more impressive than post-war reforms. For Michelle Perrot though, it was the campaign for the right to vote that was derailed by the war.

In 1914 *Le Journal* ran a referendum on women’s suffrage and reported five hundred thousand votes in favor. The political Left, which previously held itself aloof, was converted to women’s suffrage: in 1914 Jean Jaurès openly favoured giving women the vote. But the war halted this momentum. The procrastination of the 1920s and 1930s and the Senate’s long resistance to proposals for female suffrage illustrate how women’s cause regressed during the interwar period.⁶⁵⁸

This argument is not wholly convincing. *Le Journal*’s poll is hardly conclusive, and it carried out a similar vote, with similar results, after the war. The political Left often made statements in favour of female suffrage, without ever considering it an issue important enough to warrant doing much about.⁶⁵⁹ It is also difficult to see why the procrastination and the obstructionism of the Senate would have been any different prior to the war, those being the primary qualities the Senate brought to the Third Republic throughout its existence. Furthermore, it doesn’t chime in with the international experience, where women were very rarely enfranchised without some

⁶⁵⁷ Christine Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne: Histoire des Féminismes 1914-1940*. Paris: Fayard (1995) p. 19.

⁶⁵⁸ Perrot, “The New Eve and the Old Adam” p. 53.

⁶⁵⁹ See Paul Smith, *Feminism and the Third Republic: Women’s Political and Civil Rights in France, 1918-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press (1996) esp. Chapter 3.

tumultuous occurrence, such as a war or a switch to a different form of government. Perrot and Roberts also differ on the pre-war period, Perrot asserting, “The turn of the century was a time of prodigious invention and novelty which raised significant questions about the social organization of gender, but this questioning was soon silenced by the war.” Compare this to Roberts’ “They [legislators, novelists, social reformers, journalists, and feminists of all political stripes] demonstrated a strong urge to return to a pre-war era of security, a world without violent change.”⁶⁶⁰ In this quote Roberts is clearly talking of a perception of a lack of change, but there is still considerable gap between the two.⁶⁶¹ The most likely explanation is that both are overestimating the impact of the war. As Thérèse Pottecher concluded in *La Grande Revue* in 1910, “feminism has gained sincere ground in public opinion. Yet this success is little in the face of the conquests that still need to be made over the spirit of our nation.”⁶⁶²

Perrot’s argument on turbulent gender relations before the war is supported by Margaret Darrow’s claims that

According to a host of commentators at the end of the nineteenth century, the French family, society and nation were all in desperate straits because women were refusing to be feminine and men were not being sufficiently masculine. ‘Female emancipation’ was the leading culprit.⁶⁶³

Almost all the fears that appeared in the post-war period over the damage done to society by women not acting accordance with the roles nature had prescribed them are echoed before 1914. In his influential book, *The Sexual Question*, August Forel argued “The modern tendency of women to become pleasure-seekers and to take a

660 Perrot, “The New Eve and the Old Adam” p. 60, Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 10.

661 In a more recent book, Roberts has suggested that “While the issue of female identity remained at the forefront of postwar concerns, the failure of liberal beliefs to make sense of the war changed the focus of this preoccupation. The fin-de-siècle New Woman gave way to the postwar Modern Woman, who came to represent not so much a threat to (a relatively stable) liberal culture as the full-blown crisis of liberal culture itself.” Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2002) p. 249. By contrast, this thesis argues that traditional beliefs were successful in making sense of the war (at least as regards gender relations) and ensured that the Modern Woman was no more able to transcend those beliefs than the pre-war New Woman.

662 Jennifer Waeti-Walters and Steven C. Hause, *Feminisms of the Belle Epoque: A Historical and Literary Anthology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press (1994) p. 62.

663 Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, p. 9.

dislike to maternity leads to the degeneration of society. This is a grave social evil.”⁶⁶⁴ In 1913, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu wrote “The masculinisation of women is, from all points of view, one of the grave dangers facing contemporary civilisation.”⁶⁶⁵ In the same year, Theodore Joran received a prize from the Académie des sciences morales et politique for his work “Le Suffrage des Femmes” in which he asserted that the feminist argument “is only a tissue of errors, ravings and sophisms.”⁶⁶⁶ According to H. Thulié, writing in 1898, degenerate prostitutes whose destiny was “to be delivered over to deplorable excesses, to undergo the most abominable miseries, and to fall into the most shameful and abasing degradations whose torments are marked by the perpetual pursuit of new pleasures and the incessant satisfaction of their erotic frenzy.”⁶⁶⁷ Robert Nye points out that Thulié, like most observers, “saw worsening degeneracy affecting women by miring them ever more deeply in ‘female’ crimes like prostitution.”⁶⁶⁸

Annie Stora-Lamarre has argued that the immediate pre-war period saw the peak of a panic about pornography and erotic literature.

Elle (the woman) se trouve à la intersection de la complaisance et de la violence qui est une constante de l'érotisme morbide et sanglant des années 1900. Sur le thème des ravages de la passion, la femme sème le plaisir, la luxure et la mort.⁶⁶⁹

Alain Corbin agrees, arguing that the activities of “those who were engaged in the struggle against pornography and licentiousness intensified.” Supervision of prostitution became more severe. Pornography prosecutions peaked from 1910 to 1914, as it was believed to be feminising the nation while war loomed.⁶⁷⁰ The years

664 Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, p. 216.

665 quoted in Elisa Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’: Immigration, Demography and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth Century France” in *Gender & History*, 13-3 (November 2001) p. 601.

666 Waeti-Walters and Hause, *Feminisms of the Belle Epoque*, p. 38 n. 6.

667 Robert A. Nye, “Degeneration and the Medical Model of Cultural Crisis in the French *Belle Époque*” in Seymour Drescher, David Sabean and Allan Sharlin (eds.) *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe; Essays in Honor of George L. Mosse*. New Brunswick: Transaction (1982) p. 30.

668 Nye, “Degeneration” p. 39.

669 Stora-Lamarre, “Plaisirs Interdits” p. 48.

670 Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850* New York: Harvard University Press (1990) pp. 326-327. Annie Stora-Lamarre, *L'Enfer de la IIIe République*. Paris: Imago (1990) p. 203.

leading up to the war also saw several novels that showed the positive effects of war in regenerating society, in a society that clearly needed such regeneration.⁶⁷¹

The ill-effects on the health of women working in the professions had been picked up as early as 1900 by the doctor Vaucaire who noted of these young women that “Les petits prodiges ont les yeux cernés, les lèvres blanches; ils sont pâles, chétifs; leurs mouvements deviennent langoureux, les muscles n’ont plus aucune souplesse, les poumons ne savent pas respirer, l’estomac ne digère pas, le peau fonctionne mal.”⁶⁷²

The pre-war debate on hysteria was also framed in the context of social dislocation. In 1883, Henri Legrand de Saulle published *Les Hystériques*, which argued that, due to hereditary and social factors, women of the lower classes were greatly affected by this illness. Upper class women and, to a lesser extent, those from the middle classes were also affected. Those suffering from hysteria saw their character suffer, they became “égoïstes, capricieuses, irritables, désireuses d’attirer l’attention”. The consequences of this illness were not always negative; sometimes they could lead to acts of great self-abnegation. Thus he described a woman who saved several children from a burning house, with no thought of her own safety, as acting under the influence of hysteria.⁶⁷³ For Charles Richet, it was social changes that were responsible for hysteria: “la réalité inférieure au rêve; c’est un maladie commune aux déclassés, aux jeunes filles de la classe inférieure qui reçoivent une éducation supérieure à leur état.”⁶⁷⁴ Grasset remained attached to a traditional explanation “Sans vouloir manquer ici de galanterie, je ferai remarquer que la plupart des traits de caractère des hystériques ne sont que l’exagération du caractère féminin.”⁶⁷⁵

A few months before the outbreak of war the *Petit Marseillais* noted the progress of the “fille moderne”

671 Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, p. 12.

672 Yvonne Knibiehler, Catherine Fouquet, *La Femme et les Médecins*. Paris: Hachette (1983) p. 218.

673 Knibiehler, Fouquet, *La Femme et les Médecins*, p. 223.

674 Knibiehler, Fouquet, *La Femme et les Médecins*, p. 223.

675 Knibiehler, Fouquet, *La Femme et les Médecins*, p. 223.

Dès la fin du xix^e siècle, la jeune fille moderne a pressenti ses destinées: elle a constitué, dans le sein des vieilles nations lasses, comme un sort de grande peuple neuf. C'est elle, sans appui et sans guide, qui a mené son évolution.

Although the author generally approved of the changes achieved by the modern girl, he noted that “[e]lle a été extrêmement maligné”.⁶⁷⁶

If it seems clear that the early years of the twentieth century were marked by significant anxiety over gender relations, is Perrot correct to suggest that only the war prevented this debate from leading to significant changes in women's position? It seems difficult to believe that the assumptions of an improvement in conditions by contemporaries were wholly without foundation. In an article on “La femme et la guerre” that appeared in *La Petite Gironde* in 1916, the author commented approvingly that before the war when women had claimed legal and economic equality, men had responded with ironic disdain or brutal contempt. It had taken the cataclysm of war to alter this situation. By rendering women indispensable the war had allowed women to take the rights that previously they had only been able to ask for, as well as helping to save France. The bourgeois wife had become a nurse to the wounded, the refugees and the unfortunate, the wives of industrialists and shopkeepers had taken over their tasks. Everywhere, the article argued, women had replaced men.⁶⁷⁷

The assumptions of progress for women in society were often taken for granted. Those who argued in favour of the new fashions of clothes and hair argued that they were suitable for the newly emancipated woman. A spokesman for the Institut des coiffeurs des dames de France suggested that short hair could be a sign of feminism and equality.⁶⁷⁸ In 1927 designer Jacques Worth wrote “The war changed women's lives forcing them into an active life, and, in many cases, paid work.” The *Carrières féminines intellectuelles*, which was published in 1923, stated that “The war has

⁶⁷⁶ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 20 March, 1914. For other evidence of disputed gender relations before the war, see also Annelise Mauge, *L'Identité Masculine en crise: Au tournant du siècle, 1871-1914*, Paris: Editions Rivages (1987), Christopher Thompson “Un troisième sexe? Les bourgeoisies et la bicyclette dans la France fin de siècle.” in *Mouvement Social* 192 (2000) pp. 9-39.

⁶⁷⁷ *La Petite Gironde*, 23 July, 1916.

⁶⁷⁸ *L'Eclair du Midi*, 24 January, 1919.

emancipated women, and the majority of professions that, up until now have been closed to them, are now opening.”⁶⁷⁹ The 1920s saw a huge increase in women in higher education. As Thébaud admits “The war broke down age-old barriers and opened many prestigious positions to women.”⁶⁸⁰ It must be acknowledged though that these are references to a minority of educated middle class women. While the significance of their progress should not be underestimated, their experience was different to that of the vast majority of women at the time. There were changes for working women as well; the number of women in unions, which rose from 30,900 in 1900 to 89,300 in 1914, took off to reach 239,000 in 1920. The comparable male figures were 588,000, 1,026,000 and 1,355,000.⁶⁸¹ Working women also left the home as a place of work; domestic service and textile piecework both declined.⁶⁸² This may or may not be considered as necessarily a good thing, but it does show that women were not being confined to the hearth.

There was also more personal freedom in dress and hairstyle. Although the bob was controversial, it became more and more popular. It is important to remember how tight the constraints on women were before the war. For example, Hubertine Auclert was refused accommodation in a hotel because, as a single woman traveller, she was seen as being immoral.⁶⁸³ These things were much less likely to happen after a war when women had been forced/free to travel around on their own.

Marriage may also have been more pleasant for women. In the wake of the war men tended to marry older women, this being one of the ways to get round the gender imbalance caused by the war. This may have given women more equality in the marriage than there would have been with a greater age difference.⁶⁸⁴ If the marriage didn't work, divorce was more available. In 1900 there were just over 7000, in 1913 15,450. 1920 and 1921 saw the peak of divorce with 29,156 and 32,557 carried out

679 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, pp. 77-81, p. 80, p. 188.

680 Thébaud, “The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division” p. 39-40.

681 Maité Albistur and Daniel Armogathe, *Histoire du féminisme français du moyen âge à nos jours*, Paris : Editions des Femmes, (1977) p. 358.

682 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 12.

683 Felicia Gordon and Máire Cross, *Early French Feminisms, 1830-1940 : a Passion for Liberty*, Cheltenham : Edward Elgar, (1996) p. 248.

684 James F. McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, society and politics*. London: Routledge, (2000) p. 126.

respectively. After that it settled down to around 20,000 a year.⁶⁸⁵ Sex may also have been less traumatic for some women, as there were more official sources of information than previously. “Although sexual education for women remained a taboo subject before the war, in the post-war years, well-known doctors, sociologists, educators, and government officials debated it openly.” From 1925, government funded lectures on the subject by the Comité d’éducation féminine.⁶⁸⁶ Though most women still learned from relations and friends, those who for some reason would not or could not do so now had alternative sources of information..

These changes are important and may have had significant impact on the day to day lives of Frenchwomen in the 1920s. They do not, though, suggest that either a radical evolution in gender attitudes was brought about by the war, or indeed that in the war the opposite had occurred and that traditional interpretations were bolstered by the conflict. The book *Mariage Moderne* by Resclauze de Bermon highlights both the perception of social dislocation that was present during the war as well as the restricted nature of radical behaviour. It was serialised in *La Petite Gironde* which claimed in its advertisements that “L’auteur a analysé avec une sûreté et une franchise saisissantes l’âme de la jeune fille, de la jeune femme d’aujourd’hui”.⁶⁸⁷ The book is written from the viewpoint of Yvonne, a young woman from a very respectable family. She is beautiful and feminine and she doesn’t work, her primary concern as the book starts being her dowry. Her nature as a modern woman only becomes clear when she asserts

Or, j’ai la prétention d’être de mon temps, c’est-à-dire pratique, avec tout ce que le bon goût actuel autorise de sentimentalité. Je veux que mon mari me plaise, qu’une sympathie susceptible de devenir quelque chose de beaucoup plus tendre m’attire vers lui, que son âge soit en harmonie avec le mien et aussi que par sa fortune ou par son travail, il puisse m’assurer la vie large que j’aime.⁶⁸⁸

Soon afterwards she made it clear that her husband’s primary duty would be to aid her life of pleasure “Ce qu’il me faut, c’est un mari qui soit capable non seulement de

685 Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945*, p. 358.

686 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 184.

687 *La Petite Gironde*, 7 April, 1916.

688 *La Petite Gironde*, 8 April, 1916.

me comprendre, mais de me suivre.”⁶⁸⁹ For this reason she rejects the mentality of Gaston, a prospective suitor who wishes to remain loyal to his roots and farm like his ancestors. She finds the prospect of marrying a gentleman farmer dull; instead she wants to live life fully.⁶⁹⁰

Instead of marrying the safe Gaston, she meets a stranger called Roger and is swept off her feet by him. She agrees to marry him.⁶⁹¹ The marriage goes badly, in a very traditional manner; Roger gambles unsuccessfully, and then is caught having an affair. Yvonne tries nonetheless to maintain the relationship. Roger continues to spend her money. Eventually he becomes so indebted that he kills himself.

While the book seeks to portray Yvonne as representative of a new type of emancipated women, and a product of the modern age, what is most noticeable is how much her behaviour remains within traditional female norms. She goes against the wishes of her parents, who want her to marry Gaston. However, she does not ignore their wishes entirely, she tries to gain their approval and waits until it is eventually granted. Roger was a perfectly good match socially, and it was he who was in full control over their courtship. Despite the disastrous nature of the marriage, Yvonne does not seek recourse to adultery or divorce but remains loyal to Roger and allows him to spend her dowry.⁶⁹²

Denatalité

One of the major reasons why it is considered that the developments that occurred during the war years were not continued, or were reversed, is the issue of denatalité. The war had cost a vast number of the lives of young men, while at the same time displaying graphically that early twentieth-century warfare required very large armies. Clemenceau intended no exaggeration in his comment on the treaty of Versailles that “the treaty does not specify that France should commit herself to bearing many children, but that is the first thing that should have been written there.

689 *La Petite Gironde*, 10 April, 1916.

690 *La Petite Gironde*, 12 April, 1916.

691 *La Petite Gironde*, 22 April, 1916.

692 *La Petite Gironde*, 27 April, 1916, 22 April, 1916.

This is because if France renounces *la famille nombreuse*, you can put whatever fine clause in the treaty you want, you can take away all the armaments in Germany, you can do whatever you want. France will be lost because there won't be any more French people." The pronatalist organisations reflect this: *L'alliance nationale pour l'accroissement de la population française* received a considerable boost from the war. *Pour la Vie* was created in 1916.⁶⁹³ However, while the events of the war had heightened concerns over depopulation, the issue had been considered important for many years - in July 1914 the *Petit Marseillais* could claim of the question of depopulation, "puisqu'il n'en est pas de plus grave à la heure presente..."⁶⁹⁴ The debate over depopulation and low levels of natality was so well rehearsed that when the Comite Consultatif d'action économique of the Toulouse region asked its sub-committees to comment on the issue, it commented that "il n'a certainement pas eu la pensée de provoquer des joutes oratoires sur la décadence des pays de 'célibataires et des filles uniques'."⁶⁹⁵

The consequences of attempts to increase the birthrate could impact on every area of a woman's life. If the obvious example is the legislation that outlawed contraceptive propaganda and toughened the anti-abortion laws, it had many other aspects. Those who opposed female suffrage argued (somewhat tendentiously) that countries that had adopted it had seen their birthrate fall. Others believed that working women were less likely to have children, and campaigned for their return to the hearth. Some conservatives saw even the figure of the "new woman" with her lack of breasts and hips as a rejection of nourishment and motherhood.⁶⁹⁶ The campaign for motherhood and the birth rate helped justify closing many nursing and day care facilities after the war.⁶⁹⁷

Fears over the French population also affected French attitudes towards foreigners. Even in an admiring article on soldiers from Britain and her colonies, Pierre Mille could not escape the spectre of how marriages between foreign troops and French

693 Bard, Thébaud, "Les effets antiféministe de la Grande Guerre" p. 153.

694 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 10 July, 1914.

695 AN F/12/8011, 3 September, 1917.

696 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, pp. 72-3.

697 Mathile Dubesset, Françoise Thébaud and Catherine Vincent "The Female Munition Workers of the Seine" in Patrick Fridenson (ed.) *The French Home Front 1914-1918*, Oxford: Berg (1992) p. 200.

women might result in those women going overseas.⁶⁹⁸ In the *Dépêche*, General Z. argued that because of depopulation there would be no French people left by the year 2112. The loss of so many men in the war only exacerbated this situation, potentially halving the time until French extinction. His despairing conclusion was that “En 2112 il n’y a pas un Français dans notre pays. Tous seraient remplacés par des étrangers.”⁶⁹⁹ The Comité Consultatif d’action économique de la 17ème région also fretted about whether immigration was a reliable way to maintain France’s population. “Nous ne nous maintenions avant la guerre aux environs de 39.000 d’habitants que grâce à l’appoint inquiétant de l’immigration.”⁷⁰⁰ *L’Œuvre* was more resigned to the need for immigration, but hoped it could be simply a stop-gap. It contended that France’s slow population growth compared to Germany and Austria-Hungary meant there was a need to repopulate France. Naturally all possible measures needed to be taken to encourage births, but such measures would not bear fruit for 25 years and thus immigration was necessary to cover the intervening period.⁷⁰¹

It has been argued that the concern for the size of the population can be exaggerated, and that it was used as a tool to gain support for other political issues, including the removal of women from the workplace. After all, there was very little actual legislative action taken beyond the 1920 law forbidding antinatalist propaganda. Roberts argues that the even the aims of the 1920s law were not strictly demographic. Instead “... it sought specifically to bring women’s sexual practices under legislation by attacking abortion and female forms of contraception.” Roberts offers three reasons in support of this hypothesis. Firstly that it did not deal with male forms of birth control (prophylactics), secondly that the respected expert Adolphe Pinard’s opposition was disregarded, and thirdly that the deputies themselves had a small number of children.⁷⁰²

698 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 1 June, 1917.

699 *La Dépêche*, 3 October, 1916.

700 AN F/12/8011, 3 September, 1917.

701 *L’Œuvre*, 10 October, 1916.

702 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 96.

The significance of Pinard's opposition should not be overstated as it was countered by several other experts speaking in favour. The last argument is also unconvincing, as it is quite possible that the deputies may have thought that an increase in population was necessary for France but found it to their own taste or advantage to limit their own children. Similarly, *La Bataille* mocked *L'Œuvre* for having claimed in 1916 that "Après la guerre, madame, vous ne serez pas une 'honnête femme', si vous n'avez pas au moins trois enfants." The reason for *La Bataille*'s derision was not that it disagreed with the statement itself but that Gustave Téry himself only had two children.⁷⁰³ In addition, other than a shortage of men to enlist in the armies, the greatest fear that a falling population posed at the time was rural depopulation. As one of the most noticeable factors in the makeup of the French legislature was the scarcity of peasants, it was less essential that they reproduced.

The exemption of male forms of contraception is significant; the legislation was clearly attempting to create a position where men were intended to have choice over procreation and women were not. There certainly was an element of attempting to increase social control over women, but the legislation could also be seen as presenting women as the reason for *denatalité*. Furthermore the concern over syphilis and other sexual transmitted diseases would certainly have played a part in deciding to retain the legality of prophylactics. It should also be noted that conservative pronatalists delighted in the election results of 1919, proclaiming them a great improvement on those of 1914, so some increase in pronatalist activity might have been expected under any circumstance.⁷⁰⁴

The legislative action also fitted firmly into the wartime rhetoric on the subject. Before the Congrès de l'Association Nationale d'Expansion Économique, M. Souchon delivered a speech on the needs of agriculture. When he came to *natalité* the audience gave a warm reception to his speech. He asserted "la question de la natalité n'est pas une question légale, la question de la natalité est une question morale". Once again the problem was seen as propaganda: "il est certain qu'au cours de ces dernières années, des propagandes criminelles ont été faites contre la famille française, hélas!

703 *La Bataille*, 2 July, 1916.

704 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 101.

par des Français!” While in general he opposed state interference, it was necessary for the law to counter this. Another speaker at the same conference noted that depopulation of the countryside was threatening to compromise national prosperity. His first recommendation was for severe measures to be taken against “odieuse propagande contre la race, trop fréquente dans les campagnes comme dans les villes.”⁷⁰⁵

Souchon gives one reason why there was a limit to the legislative action taken on the issue, the dislike of many influential Frenchmen to grant the power to the state to interfere in their actions whether personal or professional. An equally pressing reason was economics. The war had done a great deal of damage to France’s financial capability, and it is unsurprising that various governments, committed in principle to encouraging *les familles nombreuses*, felt they were financially unable to give fiduciary incentives, or tax breaks to large families. Where there were cheap expedients then they were utilised. Thus when colonial troops were needed to make up the shortfall in French soldiers after the war, Echenberg argues that conscription was made into a systematic peace time institution in French West Africa, because this was cheaper than voluntary recruitment, which required higher pay.⁷⁰⁶

It is possible that the war was part of a shift in the emphasis of the campaign to increase the birthrate, a shift from attempting to persuade the male head of the household to give his wife more children, to persuading the wife herself of the need. Pedersen’s account of the long history of the 1920 pronatalist legislation illustrates this. In 1910 Senator Lannelongue introduced a proposal aimed at increasing the birthrate by offering inducements to fathers. By 1913, this had been revised by Strauss and Besnard, who switched the focus “almost exclusively on to women’s interaction with the medical profession.” It was also more repressive and offered fewer inducements.⁷⁰⁷ The legislation remained stalled until 1920 when Ignace extracted a few of the repressive articles on abortion, anti-natalist propaganda and

705 AN F/12/8001, 26 March, 1917.

706 Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960*. Portsmouth NH.: Heinemann (1991) p. 43.

707 Jean Elisabeth Pedersen “Regulating Abortion and Birth Control: Gender, Medicine, and Republican Politics in France, 1870-1920” in *French Historical Studies*, 19-3 (1996) pp. 684-686.

female contraception and put them forward on their own. Both houses passed them easily.

Zola's pre-war natalist tract *Fécondité* glorified woman as a mother and a housekeeper, not as a factory worker. However its main argument was to glorify fertile peasant life, compared to the urban bourgeois with their child limitation strategies and individualist morality. In it, Dr. Boutain warns the hero Mathieu Froment about the perils of contraception.

One cannot deceive an organ with impunity. Imagine a stomach which one continually tantalized with an indigestible lure whose presence unceasingly called forth the blood while offering nothing to digest. Every function that is not exercised according to the normal order becomes a permanent source of danger. You stimulate a woman, contenting her only with the spasm, and you have only satisfied her desire, which is simply the enticing stimulant; you have not acceded to fertilization, which is the goal, the necessary and indispensable act. And you are surprised when this betrayed and abused organism, diverted from its proper use, reveals itself to be the seat of terrible disorders, disgraces and perversions!⁷⁰⁸

Cole argues that this declaration of Dr. Boutain implies that female contraception is being used, but the whole passage seems to grant the entire agency to the man and with it the choice of whether to use contraception.⁷⁰⁹

The declaration of Doctor Boutain can be contrasted with this post-war claim

Quel est le grand devoir de la femme? Enfanter, encore enfanter, toujours enfanter. Que la femme se refuse à la maternité, qu'elle la limite, qu'elle la supprime et la femme ne mérite plus ses droits; la femme n'est plus rien.⁷¹⁰

Not only does this make women's role in society quite clear it also implies "la femme se refuse" that it is the woman who is responsible for the refusal. This is the same as the argument made by Clément Vautel in *Madame ne veut pas d'enfant*. Vautel's

708 Joshua H. Cole, "'There Are Only Good Mothers': The Ideological Work of Women's Fertility in France before World War I" in *French Historical Studies*, 19-3 (1996) p. 640.

709 Cole, 'There Are Only Good Mothers' p. 671.

710 Françoise Thébaud, *Quand nos grand-mères donnaient la vie: La Maternité en France dans l'entre deux guerres* Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon (1986) p. 85.

work also contrasted the fertility of the working class with the sterility of the bourgeoisie.⁷¹¹

However, a report on depopulation in 1917 by the Comité Consultatif d'action économique of the Toulouse region made it clear that they believed the problem was with male behaviour.

Le célibataire, surtout le célibataire fils de famille, tient en France le haut de pavé. Il occupe les hauts emplois, réussit dans la politique, échappe aux plus lourdes de nos charges, débauche nos filles, détourne nos femmes, affiche ses maîtresses, donne les plus pernicioeux exemples ... et est considéré.⁷¹²

It was necessary for him to be seen as a bad citizen, to tax him heavily, to exclude him from certain functions, occupations and offices. The report also argued that part of the opprobrium should be levelled at households without children or those with less than three, but the bachelor was the main target of their aim.⁷¹³ Henry Spont in his book *La Femme et la guerre* followed a similarly traditional line, arguing that women were still defined by their motherhood, and that those without children were condemned to that unhappy fate by their rejection by men.

Aux mères françaises!

Heureuses ou non, (the married woman) elles ont justifié les espoirs de leur famille, elles ont atteint le but proposé, elles sont désormais en règle avec la nature, avec la société. [...] elles peuvent marcher la tête haute, sortir seules, promener les enfants, qui consacrent la noblesse et l'utilité de leur rôle.

Voilà des créatures dignes d'estimes, qui remplissent bien leur mission.

Mais les autres, celles que l'homme a dédaignées! Quelle tristesse, quelle humiliation de se sentir un être indésirable, encombrant qui va traîner sa vie en marge de la grande route et disparaître sans laisser des traces, après avoir trahi les plus légitimes espérances!⁷¹⁴

Spont argued that men rejected women primarily because they did not provide enough in the way of dowries.⁷¹⁵ He suggested a variety of unhappy life paths that might be

711 Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, p. 131-137.

712 AN F/12/8011, 3 September, 1917.

713 AN F/12/8011, 3 September, 1917.

taken by the rejected women. Some would just go on living with their parents, or live on their own in solitary misery, others would go into employment and some would revolt. These would be the ones who end up in *unions libres*, where they would inevitably be betrayed.⁷¹⁶ Spont indignantly denied that these women were to blame, “Est-ce leur faute? Non! Toutes ont souhaité se marier, être mères.” It was the fault of the man, too demanding, and scornful of his responsibilities.⁷¹⁷

L'Eclair du Midi came out in favour of a financial solution, in this case assistance to parents of large families, and reported that they had received a large amount of positive feedback for this idea from their readership. Once again the problem was considered to be practical rather than due to a crisis in female behaviour.⁷¹⁸ Likewise, Galéot in his book *L'Avenir de la race* ascribed the problem to material difficulties, explicitly focussing on paternity. “Dans l'état actuel de notre organisation sociale et de nos mœurs, la paternité est pour presque universalité des citoyens un très lourd sacrifice matériel.”⁷¹⁹

Clément Chaussé in his book on pregnant women working in munitions factories suggested that the key way to increase natality was financial incentives. He made no mention of female morality, “La grossesse restera un accident tant que la vie normale n'aura pas repris son cours et tant que l'enfant sera une trop lourde charge pour ses parents.”⁷²⁰ Pierre Mille also believed that the solution was to offer financial inducements for large families, and the Lyon branch of the *Ligue populaire des pères et mères de familles nombreuses* launched its periodical by calling for economic and political advantages for large families.⁷²¹

Pronatalists also worked to convince women of the desirability of having babies. Paul Haury argued that maternity was the essence of female psychology; Fernand Boverat

714 Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, pp. 16-17.

715 Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, p. 18.

716 Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, pp. 20-22.

717 Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, p. 22.

718 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 19 September, 1916.

719 A.-L. Galéot, *L'Avenir de la race*, Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale (1917), p. 214.

720 Clément Chaussé, *A propos des usines de guerre et des femmes enceintes*, Paris: Jouve & C^{ie} (1917), p. 60.

721 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 June, 1916, *Nos Enfants*. Spring 1916, p. 5.

claimed that the infant satisfied “le plus profond des instincts qui existe chez la femme. Cartoons in the natalist journal “La femme et l’enfant” showed children bringing happiness to miserable relationships.⁷²² Other natalists emphasised it more as a duty than a pleasure, Jacques Bertillon claiming “Between the violent causes of devastation and Malthusianism there is one difference, the latter calamity, even as it slowly destroys the country, makes none of its inhabitants suffer. How true it is that the interests of individuals can be entirely opposed to those of the collectivity.”⁷²³ Alfred Krug came to a similar conclusion in his 1918 pamphlet, *Pour la repopulation*.⁷²⁴ Auguste Isaac argued that society was arranged to the advantage of those without children and asked “Qui sont donc ces nigauds qui veulent avoir tant d’enfants?”⁷²⁵ Sébastien Marc, in his book *Contre la Dépoulation*, also suggested that it was a mental problem, but his suggested solution was a reform of the Civil Code system of inheritance.⁷²⁶

The debate over France’s slow population growth was primarily characterised by the diversity of opinions as to causes and remedies. This is illustrated by the Congrès National de la Natalité, held in Nancy in September 1919. Alexandre Dreux, President of Nancy’s Chamber of Commerce ascribed the failing birthrate to egotism and lack of civic spirit, though he didn’t specify which sex he thought was primarily responsible.⁷²⁷ Paul Bureau demanded “purification sociale”, the family vote, subsidies for large families from the state and higher wages for large families from their employers as well as a solution to the problem of bad housing in order to rectify the situation.⁷²⁸ Auguste Isaac focussed on the ideal of a mother “qui ne soit pas obligée de travailler en usine et qui puisse s’occuper de ses enfants.”⁷²⁹ Isaac did mention the practical impact of the war but he didn’t claim that there had been any

722 Thébaud, *Quand nos grand-mères donnaient la vie* p. 86, Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*.

723 Cole, ‘There Are Only Good Mothers’ p. 658.

724 Grayzel, *Woman’s Identities at War*, p. 105. Alfred Krug, *Pour la Repopulation*, Nancy: Berger-Levrault (1918).

725 Auguste Isaac, *Discours au déjeuner mensuel de l’Union du Commerce & de l’Industrie pour la Défense sociale*, Paris: Secrétariat de “La plus grande famille” (1917) p. 21.

726 Sébastien Marc, *Contre la Dépoulation*, Le Mans: Benderitter (1918).

727 *Congrès National de la Natalité, Nancy, 25-28 September, 1919*, Nancy: Imprimeries Reunies de Nancy (1919) p. 12.

728 *Congrès National de la Natalité*.

729 *Congrès National de la Natalité*, p. 21 My emphasis, by acknowledging that women had been forced into undertaking work in the factories, Isaac is evidently reducing the blame placed on women.

changes in morality resulting from the war, except that the allocation had accustomed people to accepting subsidies from the state.⁷³⁰

While observers generally agreed that the work done by women during the war had had a negative impact on the birthrate they differed on whether this was to be a permanent change. A report by Dr Lesage for the Comité du travail féminin argued that

Certains esprits, forts et sceptiques, disent, en semant le pessimisme, que l'ouvrière ne veut plus d'enfants et que ce n'est pas la peine de créer des chambres d'allaitement. Mille fois non..! Ayons confiance en elle. Quand, en ce moment, on la voit en pleine valeur, en plein travail, en pleine fièvre patriotique, forger l'airain sacré, on est saisi d'une angoisse reconnaissante. Comme le poilu à la tranchée, l'ouvrière a sauvé le pays.

Non, Mesdames et Messieurs, quand le cyclone sera calmé, nous verrons l'ouvrière reprendre la vie commune et se consacrer à ses devoirs de maternité, consciente de sa force, consciente de sa valeur, consciente de sa dignité.⁷³¹

Despite this diversity of views, the idea that women could actually contribute to finding a solution was rare. As he acknowledged, the deputy Charles Chaumet was unusual in making an argument in favour of female suffrage in order to gain female input into which legislative changes were needed to boost the birthrate.

Nous ne pouvons en fixer les dispositions pratiques sans la collaboration de la femme. Elle doit avoir voix au chapitre dans ces questions délicates aussi bien que lorsqu'il s'agit de l'éducation des jeunes filles et des conditions des travail. Et c'est pourquoi, au grand scandale de certains de mes plus chers amis, je suis partisan du suffrage des femmes.⁷³²

The *Ligue populaire des pères et mères de familles nombreuses* certainly didn't share Chaumet's position, arguing that granting the vote to women would do nothing to change France's population situation, and that only the introduction of the family vote

⁷³⁰ *Congrès National de la Natalité*, p. 23, pp. 26-27.

⁷³¹ Comité du travail féminin, *Protection et utilisation de la main d'œuvre féminine*, 19 December, 1916, p.158.

⁷³² *La Petite Gironde*, 18 August, 1918.

could be effective. Advocating allowing widows with children the vote was the closest they came to support for female suffrage.⁷³³

Françoise Thébaud notes wryly that when attempts were made to persuade the French to procreate that men were offered money, women were offered medals.⁷³⁴ While it is difficult to argue that this was not based on a condescending view of women, it may also have been an attempt to link female medals for fertility with male military decorations; both had performed the duty that nature had bestowed upon them.

This is not to say that the behaviour of women was never held to be responsible for declining birth rates. For Paul Bureau, female work in industry and commerce was the major obstacle towards an increase in the birthrate, with celibacy, concubinage and the selfishness of young married couples as secondary reasons.⁷³⁵ George d'Esparbes also blamed women working, claiming that it resulted in either "l'ignorance ou l'égoïsme" which then reduced natality. This ignorance also increased infant mortality, as women no longer were learning how to look after babies. D'Esparbes suggested the best solution was the "renvoi aux foyers des mères de famille." However, he didn't believe that the war was to blame for women being forced to work, claiming instead that it was too late to "détruire un système de travail établi depuis des années."⁷³⁶ Adolphe Pinard noted that infant mortality had risen in 1916 compared to 1915. He believed that pregnant women had been seduced by high wages, and were not taking advantage of protection available to them. "Nous le savons et avec une certitude absolue: *le travail de l'usine et son gain a été pour les pauvres femmes en état de gestation, pour les mères nécessiteuses, un véritable miroir à alouettes.*" So he proposed forbidding entrance into a factory "*à toute femme en état de gestation, à toute femme allaitant son enfant, à toute femme accouchée depuis moins de six mois.*"⁷³⁷ M. Héron, in a report for L'Union du Sud-Ouest des Syndicats d'Encouragement de Motoculture, argued that depopulation was partly caused by the attractions of the towns with "le prix disproportionné des salaires offerts par

733 *Nos Enfants*. November-December 1918, p. 145, March-April 1917, p. 7.

734 Thébaud, *Quand nos grand-mères donnaient la vie* p. 91.

735 Bard, Thébaud, "Les effets antiféministe de la Grande Guerre" p. 153.

736 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 2 November, 1915.

737 *La Matin*, 6 December, 1916 (emphasis in the original).

l'industriels, le goût de la toilette chez la femme.”⁷³⁸ In the *Petit Marseillais*, Durandy blamed women for wanting to look pretty rather than having babies.⁷³⁹

For all the natalist legislation and rhetoric, the level of the French population continued to be static. “Malgré les lois, les Français étaient de plus en plus malthusiens.”⁷⁴⁰ Restraint, contraception and abortion were all used to control family size. In 1898, a member of the clergy wrote a letter to *L'Ami du clergé* about questioning in confession about contraception. “La réponse invariable sera celle-ci: ‘S’il faut avoir un enfant tous les neuf mois pour se confesser, je ne consentirai jamais’.”⁷⁴¹

Not only did people limit their own families, they were reluctant to condemn others for it either. The move to switch from trial by jury to trial by judge for abortion suggests that many people thought that abortion was understandable under certain circumstances. Public discourse on the evils of abortion was not matched by popular action against it. Similarly, as Offen points out, “In no industrializing country had women constituted so great a percentage of the labor force ... yet in no country did (male) prescriptive rhetoric insist so strongly on the necessity of achieving the ideal of a sexual division of labor”.⁷⁴² A report by the Comité Consultatif d'action économique for the Toulouse region in 1917 on the subject lamented

Le mal sur lequel nous sommes appelés à délibérer est connu. Il a été dénoncé par les rapporteurs des statistiques de dénombrement, par de courageux écrivains et conférenciers; les Chambres de commerce, l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques ont poussé le cri d'alarme; des commissions parlementaires ont délibéré sur la danger et ses palliatifs; l'intention de modérer “la course à l'abîme” a inspiré quelques timides mesures législatives...

However

738 AN F/12/8011, 27 June, 1917.

739 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 23 August, 1916.

740 Thébaud, *Quand nos grand-mères donnaient la vie* p. 91.

741 Martine Sevegrand, Limiter les naissances: Le cas de conscience des catholiques français (1880-1939) in *Vingtième Siècle* 30 (Apr-June, 1991) p. 42.

742 Karen Offen, *Women and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920-1940*. Florence: European University Institute (1987) p. 11.

Il ne paraît cependant pas que la conscience nationale ait la notion aigüe du péril. L'amour et la fécondité sont restés en France matières à propos légers, et aucun puissant mouvement d'opinion tendant à l'avenir de la race n'a impressionné les pouvoirs publics.⁷⁴³

These instances show the problems of assuming that the population at large accepted the rhetoric of the powerful. A further example is the issue of infant mortality. This had been a major concern for republicans like Paul Strauss before the war, and there was much debate on the issue. Rachel Fuchs, drawing on Roberts' work, argues that after World War One there was a significant change in emphasis, from trying to reduce infant mortality to pushing motherhood as the desired role for women.⁷⁴⁴ Yet infant mortality began to fall at this moment, while wet nursing declined sharply from 1916 as part of a considerable improvement in infant care.⁷⁴⁵

Monuments and Commemoration

The aftermath of the war saw the erection of memorials to the war dead throughout France. Practically every commune built an individual monument to its dead. While these monuments were sincerely intended to honour the heroes of France, they also could have other meanings. Of course many communes were restricted by cost to simple steles, but other monuments featured more intricate sculpture. This often led to a great deal of controversy, particularly along the religious divide. The fights for religious or secular commemoration were often bitter. The conflict was further complicated by the 1905 Separation law, which forbade commemorative monuments to have religious emblems, other than those in cemeteries. The ministry of the interior sent out a circular in April 1919, confirming that the law of 1905 remained in force. This was changed in 1924, but by then most monuments had been built.⁷⁴⁶

743 AN F/12/8011, 3 September, 1917.

744 Rachel G. Fuchs, "Introduction to Forum: Population and the State in the Third Republic" in *French Historical Studies*, 19-3 (1996), p. 634.

745 Anne-Marie Sohn, "Between the Wars in France and England" in Françoise Thébaud (ed.) *A History of Women, vol.5: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (1994) pp. 105-106.

746 Antoine Prost, "Mémoires Locales, Mémoires Nationales: Les Monuments de 1914-1918 en France." *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 167, (1992) p. 45.

The positioning of the monuments testifies to this. In Brittany, the vast majority were in cemeteries, elsewhere it varied between the churchyard and town hall, symbols of clericalism and secularism respectively. Occasionally the school or a public park provided a more neutral setting, though even here the *école laïque* carried ideological baggage.⁷⁴⁷

Beyond this, Annette Becker argues that the sculptures also intended another meaning, one that crossed the religious divide:

Les femmes y sont vierges comme des saintes, hautaines dans leur chagrin de veuves, figées dans leur sens du devoir. On sent combien ces oeuvres sont une reconstruction idéologique. Les sculpteurs ont réussi ce qu'on leur demandait: ressusciter l'Union Sacrée et l'union des familles, par-delà le drame.⁷⁴⁸

Daniel Sherman goes further, arguing that commemoration not only reinscribed gender codes which had been disrupted in the war but also “that commemoration itself played out, in gendered terms, a pervasive cultural unease in which nothing less than the masculine cast of politics and national citizenship was at stake.”

During the nineteenth century, republicans built on the Revolutionary ideas of republican citizenship and the citizen army to create “an inherent association of citizenship, masculinity, and military service.” This is a very important point. Those on the left who opposed the law returning to three years military service in 1914 often did so within the context of defending the nation in arms. Vincent Auriol, writing in the *Midi Socialiste* wanted to “défendre l'armée nationale contre les criminelles entreprises des fournisseurs intéressés et des professionnels du militarisme.” His slogan was “Vive la Nation armée! mais a bas les trois ans! a bas l'Empire! Vive la Paix Internationale!”⁷⁴⁹ Even when there was a distinctly pacifist tone to the message, the citizen army was not denounced. According to a report by the prefect of the Haute Garonne, the syndicalist Marty-Rolland believed that the people “ne veulent plus la guerre, mais la paix, plus d'armée permanente, mais les milices

747 Annette Becker, *Les Monuments aux Morts: Patrimoine et Mémoire de la grande guerre*, Paris: Editions Errance (1988) p. 12.

748 Becker, *Les Monuments aux Morts*, p. 84.

749 *Le Midi Socialiste*, 12 May, 1913.

nationales.”⁷⁵⁰ It is noticeable that even those campaigning for the reduction in length of military service rarely oppose its existence. Only on the extreme left was there outright opposition to military service. In a pamphlet produced in May 1913 by the Fédération Communiste Anarchiste “Contre les armements, Contre la loi de 3 ans, Contre tout militarisme” which concluded by advocating desertion, it urged conscripts: “ne sois pas un fratricide, ne sois pas un assassin, sois un homme”.⁷⁵¹ The assertion that not to fight showed you were a man strongly implies that the reverse was commonly held to be true.

It was also a common reason given for denying female suffrage that women had not earned it through military service, and one which feminists felt they needed to combat, childbirth often being posited as the female *impôt de sang*. An example of how close the association was is given by M Vignols, a syndicalist speaking in St-Malo in May 1913 against the three years law. He argued that the suffering women endure during gestation was significant, and it would be more profitable for everyone if the fruit of their labours were to work rather than be cannon fodder. He thus proposed that women launch a *grève du ventre*.⁷⁵² When women sought to present themselves for registration on the electoral list in January 1914, the clerk in the Eleventh Arrondissement responded ironically by asking for their certificates proving military service.⁷⁵³ The war, which provided a genuine example of the nation under arms, should surely have reinforced this nexus. For Bard and Thébaud, “La guerre a réactivé la définition de la citoyenneté qui associe droits politiques et devoir de défendre sa patrie.”⁷⁵⁴ However, Sherman argues that the reverse was true.⁷⁵⁵

Sherman also argues that it was felt necessary to combat the threat posed by the all-male world created in the trenches. His argument is based on the assertion that the mutinies of 1917 constituted a threat to the patriarchal social order. Thus it was necessary for commemoration to reinforce the traditional family order. He returns to

750 AN F/7/13339, 18 March, 1913.

751 AN F/7/13339, May, 1913.

752 AN F/7/13340. May, 1913.

753 Steven C. Hause with Anne R. Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, (1984) p. 140.

754 Bard, Thébaud, “Les effets antiféministe de la Grande Guerre” p. 157.

755 Sherman, “Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity” p. 84.

this point by suggesting that war memorials involved a subliminal choice of poses, atypical of the war, which represented masculinity as aggressive and heroic and “repressed any lingering memories of homosocial friendship.”⁷⁵⁶ However, Sherman also argues for the essential similarity of the various texts, commemorative speeches, novels, memoirs and advice literature, which “framed the construction of monuments and that, reciprocally, monuments helped to legitimate.”⁷⁵⁷ Wartime and commemorative texts however are all insistent on the existence of homosocial friendship and the growth of veterans associations was just the most obvious manifestation of a desire to continue it. Thus if there was an attempt to construct commemoration wholly in familial terms, there was also a strong ideological current seeking to retain the image of the brotherhood of the trenches.

Sherman describes how Pierre Andrienne, the hero of Maurice Genevoix’s *la Joie* is disgusted at the “petty bickering that marked the construction of the monument”. This is an example of how monuments were a contested site; a point Sherman makes eloquently himself in another article, where he describes the various factions that sought to control the commemoration process and their underlying motivations.⁷⁵⁸ An examination of the inauguration of the monument to the dead of the Savoie gives a clearer idea of the preoccupations of those in charge of constructing a memorial.

One of the first things to be noted is that the committee appointed to deal with the issue was very large - 35 people. The size and the composition of the committee suggest that the desire was to achieve inclusivity in the design and creation of the memorial, rather than to privilege an ideological position. That all 35 were male suggests the limits of this inclusivity.⁷⁵⁹ In fact the affair was almost wholly male, all the speeches being delivered by men. The only exception was a song “Hymne Aux

756 Sherman, “Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity” p. 85, p. 92.

757 Sherman, “Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity” p. 85.

758 Sherman, “Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity” p. 88. Daniel J. Sherman, “Bodies and Names: the Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France” in *American Historical Review* (1998) 103:2 pp. 443-466.

759 *Inauguration du monument des Savoyards morts pour la France*. Chambéry : Impr. chambérienne; libr. Dardel (1928) pp. 7-8.

Savoyards, morts pour la France” sung at the inauguration of the monument, which was written by a woman, Marie-Rose Michaud Lapeyre.⁷⁶⁰

The speeches by Borrel, deputy and president of the committee, and Juilland, the mayor of Chambéry, both spent only a short time on the war itself, Juilland claiming, “les événements sont encore trop proches pour qu’il soit besoin de les rappeler.”⁷⁶¹ Instead they utilised the glorious dead as supporters for their political cause. Both claimed to be speaking on behalf of the dead. In Borrel’s view they had fought for a Republican France, for humanity, progress and justice, while for Juilland: “Ils voulaient, nos morts, que la France pût développer librement, sans crainte, a l’abri des agressions, son clair et généreux génie dans les œuvres de paix, de civilisation et de progrès.”⁷⁶²

The next speech by Gustave Pillet, Vice-President of the Savoie veteran’s association, was very different, being almost entirely devoted to the war. While it strongly focused on the sacrifices made by soldiers, it also offered a sympathetic view of women and the supporting presence that they represented. He described those lost at the front, fathers and brothers, but also “du Mari, qui n’ignorait pas la vaillance de l’épouse, mais redoutait pour elle les brutalités de la vie;” and “du Fiancé qui apportait espoir et joyeux rêve, et auquel allait incomber l’une des plus belles tâches de la vie: fonder un foyer.” Later on he says “Hommes de tout âges, qui avez vécu la guerre à l’abri, - femmes qui n’en avez pas connu pas toutes les privations”.⁷⁶³ It is also traditionalist, speaking of the “task” of founding a family home. It does not suggest that the war shook his view of gender relations; his references to women seem to be motivated by a desire for all sections of the commune to be recognised rather than as a focus for the speech.

⁷⁶⁰ *Inauguration du monument des Savoyards*, pp. 15-16. This pattern of men making speeches and women’s role being restricted to singing patriotic songs is seen again in other inauguration ceremonies. *Inauguration du Monument aux Morts de la Grande Guerre, Commune de Lux* (1923), *Fête d’inauguration du monument commémoratif de Longueville-sur-Aube*. Troyes: Imprimerie Paul Bage (1922)

⁷⁶¹ *Inauguration du monument des Savoyards*, p. 27.

⁷⁶² *Inauguration du monument des Savoyards*, p. 22 p. 28.

⁷⁶³ *Inauguration du monument des Savoyards*, p. 33, p. 35.

The final speaker was the guest of honour, President Poincaré, who devoted a long portion of his speech to individual descriptions of the battalions, before continuing on to justify his current foreign policy as based on the lessons of the war.

On the evidence of this, the preoccupations of those in charge of the monument were fairly narrowly focused on their position in the masculine political agenda of the Third Republic, with women excluded by default, rather than by intent. The fact that it took until 1928 for the inauguration to take place also suggests there was no desperate need for this particular form of commemoration to combat a threat to that masculine agenda arising from the war.

At the ceremony at Beauvais, the chair of the ceremony, M. Desgroux lauded the sacrifices made by the soldiers, but also their families, arguing that the city had given France “huit cents de ses meilleurs enfants qui l’ont sauvée par leur mort héroïque, pendant que leurs mères, leurs épouses, leurs bambins supportaient avec stoïcisme les assauts impuissants de la rage et de la barbarie teutonnes.”⁷⁶⁴ M. Largilliere, the Vice President of the Beauvais veterans also sought inclusiveness amongst those who had suffered.

Ils [anciens combattants] savent que vous n’oubliez pas les camarades morts et l’enseignement qu’ils ont fourni, ils savent aussi que vous êtes toujours pleins de bonté pour les mutilés, et que votre charité pour les veuves et les orphelins est sans borne.⁷⁶⁵

The next speaker, M. Noel, a Senator from the Oise, like the politicians who spoke at Chambéry emphasised the current political situation, and how France needed to be vigilant to combat the eternal Prussian threat.⁷⁶⁶

An interesting, if unusual, monument is the one in Equeurdreville. Made by Emilie Rodez, one of the few female sculptors commissioned to construct a monument, it depicts a mother with two young children looking exhausted, dispirited. The inscription read “Que Maudite Soit la Guerre. Aux enfants d’Equeurdreville morts

⁷⁶⁴ *Inauguration du monument aux enfants de Beauvais*, pp. 7-8

⁷⁶⁵ *Inauguration du monument aux enfants de Beauvais*, p. 13

⁷⁶⁶ *Inauguration du monument aux enfants de Beauvais*, p. 15

pendant la guerre 1914-1918”, makes it one of the very few overtly pacifist monuments in France.⁷⁶⁷ While the men responsible for the erection of the monument must have accepted the design, it is an indication that women might have had a different conception of the war than that of the male establishment.

What did women think?

This study, like the vast majority of studies on gender and the First World War, has focused on male views of women. Nevertheless, the patriarchal structures of Republican France seem to have enjoyed at least the tacit support of most women, and several studies have discussed the lack of feminist activity against the oppression of women. Of course this cannot be taken to imply that women unquestionably did accept male discourse on society; there were several other factors that hindered the development of feminist activity on the Anglo-American model, not least that the Interior Ministry ordered the police to refuse almost all applications for feminist street demonstrations throughout the existence of the Third Republic. There thus remains the question as to how women saw society at the time, and how the war modified their understanding of it.

Susan Kent’s study of the effects of the war on British feminism suggests that the war had a dramatic impact on feminist perceptions of gender.

With the onset of the Great War, many feminists began to modify their understandings of masculinity and femininity. Their insistence upon equality with men, and their acknowledgement of the model of sex war that accompanied that demand, gradually gave way to an ideology that emphasized women’s special sphere - a separate sphere, in fact - and carried with it an urgent belief in the relationship between the sexes as one of complementarity. Pre-war feminists had vigorously attacked the notion of separate spheres and the medical and scientific discourses upon which those spheres rested. Many feminists after the First World War, by contrast, pursued a program that championed rather than challenged the pervading ideas about masculinity and femininity...⁷⁶⁸

767 A. Becker, *Les Monuments aux Morts* p. 76, According to Becker, there were no more than 5 or 6 explicitly pacifist memorials in France.

768 Kent, “Love and Death”, pp. 154-155.

This change was brought about primarily through the shock felt by British women at the dreadful realities of the war. Simultaneously admiring the heroism of the soldiers, and horrified at the brutality needed to fight it, to women it seemed a graphic illustration that men and women were better suited for different tasks. A flavour of this attitude is displayed in the views of Millicent Fawcett in October 1914

While the necessary, inevitable work of men as combatants is to spread death, destruction, red ruin, desolation and sorrow untold, the work of women is the exact opposite. It is ... to help, to assuage, to preserve, to build up the desolate home, to bind up the broken lives, to serve the State by saving life rather than by destroying it.⁷⁶⁹

As well as the resounding call for traditional roles, this statement has powerful overtones of repugnance at the conduct of war, firstly by the extended list of the evils of war, then by the final comparison of roles. Of course she acknowledges that this destruction of life is necessary and inevitable, but it is hardly a resounding endorsement of war, and her depiction of the female role as oppositional to men's, rather than complementary, further distances women from it.

The early date of this quote shows how soon this change in attitude happened. During the first phase of the war, it was portrayed in a very traditional manner. Much of the atrocity propaganda that circulated in Britain focused on outrages against women, emphasising the heroic role being undertaken by British soldiers in protecting their womenfolk from the misfortunes that had befallen the women of Belgium and Northern France. The suffrage movement almost as one swung behind the line that a woman's task was to take up her traditional roles.⁷⁷⁰

For Kent, this change in view was in many ways based on flawed perceptions of the suffering that trench warfare was having on the men involved in it. Censorship and propaganda prevented women from making an accurate judgement on the situation.

⁷⁶⁹ Kent, "Love and Death", p. 156.

⁷⁷⁰ Kent, "Love and Death", pp. 156-158.

Those women who were able to hold on to pre-war understandings about gender ... were those who had experienced the war directly, at the front. Most 'new' feminists, by contrast saw the war from afar, from home.⁷⁷¹

It does also have to be noted that there was a boost to feminism brought about by the war work done by women, and the privations they suffered as a consequence of the fighting. Nina Boyle of the Women's Freedom League argued, "women's place by universal consensus of opinion is no longer the Home. It is the battlefield, the farm, the factory, the shop." Rebecca West believed that: "Surely, never before in modern history can women have lived a life so completely parallel to that of the regular Army."⁷⁷²

Nevertheless, for Kent the ultimate legacy of the war in Britain was a shift from women believing that masculinity/femininity were "the products of laws, attitudes and institutions" to a belief in a "biologically determined, innate male and female sexuality." She quotes Christabel Pankhurst writing in 1924

Some of us hoped [for] more from woman suffrage than is ever going to be accomplished. My own large anticipations were based upon ignorance (which the late war dispelled) of the magnitude of the task which we women reformers so confidently wished to undertake when the vote should be ours.⁷⁷³

Of course it cannot be assumed that a similar process occurred in France. Indeed French feminism had been characterised before the war by the very features that Kent notes in post-war British feminism. Yet there are echoes in this report made during the war by the French section of the CIFPP "Le devoir impérieux des femmes, aujourd'hui plus que jamais est de dénoncer et de combattre cet universal mensonge [that war is "une des formes possible ou même nécessaires de l'activité humaine"], par lequel le meurtres des hommes se fait accepter à la pensée des hommes."⁷⁷⁴ Jacobzone notes that "Les militaires sont à la fois admirés, convoités et redoutés".⁷⁷⁵

771 Kent, "Love and Death", p. 155.

772 Kent, "Love and Death", p. 161.

773 Kent, "Love and Death", p. 171.

774 AN F/7/13365.

775 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 297.

Jo Burr Margadant's study of the *institutrices* of the Third Republic gives an interesting insight to women, who were unusual amongst the middle class in having sought paid employment before the war. This independent choice might not necessarily mark them out as feminists, but it does suggest that they were women with their own opinions on society. In lieu of the usual dignitaries who came to address departing pupils, during the war these *institutrices* had to take over the role of speaking at graduation ceremonies. In 1915 they delivered a resoundingly traditional message. Marie Lépine argued "To nurse, to dress wounds, to cure, to conserve, such is the role of women in peacetime." This was all the more vital in wartime. The *directrice* of the college at Dax stressed how the female war effort paled in comparison with the men at the front: "boys' lycées and collèges piously celebrate the glory of teachers and students who are suffering and dying for the nation ... we feel profoundly the humbleness of our contributions." Looking to the post-war France, Cécilia Terrène Lafleur declared, "Your brothers will be the poets, the scholars, the artists of the new France. You will be the guardians of the foyer..."⁷⁷⁶

However, Margadant argues, by the equivalent ceremonies of 1916, things had changed dramatically. No longer did the women make apologies for making the speeches themselves, while the messages contained in them were less traditional.⁷⁷⁷ Alice Bolleau, the *directrice* of the lycée in Niort argued, "Single women do not have the right to be useless and inactive. The liberal professions, the administration, commerce, even industry need their intelligence and their activity." Similarly Mlle. Thomas, a headmistress in St Etienne, believed that

The type of girl, occupied by useless tasks, for whom a bit of embroidery, an hour of piano sufficed, once her studies ended, was already on the wane before the war. All the more reason for her disappearance today.⁷⁷⁸

Their students were urged out to work by Mlle. Bousquet, who took "the beautiful motto of our heroic defenders who cry out to one another: 'We shall go on because

⁷⁷⁶ Jo Burr Margadant, *Madame le Professeur: Women Educators in the Third Republic* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1990) pp. 240-241. It is noticeable that the male roles are distinctly unwarlike.

⁷⁷⁷ Margadant, *Madame le Professeur*, p. 242.

⁷⁷⁸ Margadant, *Madame le Professeur*, p. 243.

we must.’ Let us say, instead, “We shall work because we must.” Margaret Lépine in Agen admitted that it went against the taste of her students to cultivate the soil and that the “duty does not seem to befit you, but I tell you that it does because it is going to be the task of everyone.” Louise Thuillat Manuel admonished the graduates of Limoges that “as good French women, you will not have satisfied all your obligations just because you have fulfilled your family duties.”⁷⁷⁹

Yet there are clear limits to this change in attitude, graphically illustrated by all the caveats included in the statements. Bolleau restricted her exhortations to find paid employment to single women. Bousquet said that women had to work, not that it was necessarily desirable. Thuillat Manuel believed that family duties naturally came before anything else. Most of all, for the intelligent, ambitious, middle class graduates of these schools, being encouraged to till the soil or work in “administration, commerce or even industry” could hardly have been seen as emancipatory.

For these *instutrices* traditional roles were still seen as the ideal, but in wartime they were not sufficient. Nevertheless they appear entirely confident in the ability of their charges to take on all the extra tasks that war made necessary. In Anjou, Mathilde Allanic believed that the war had allowed a re-evaluation of French women.

Française! Pour la majorité des habitants de notre planète, ce vocable équivalait à un synonyme de frivolité, d’étourderie, de coquetterie, d’inconscience presque anormale.” However the war had shown that the French woman had “ses qualités de ferme et lucide raison, d’intelligence initiative, de persévérance courageuse.

Nevertheless she still saw a traditional role as the ideal. “C’est dans une vie familiale, tendre et simple, que s’épanouit l’âme gracieuse des colombes de France.”⁷⁸⁰

When French women spoke of feminism, their ideas were traditional. Jeannine, while arguing in favour of feminism, dismissed the American and English suffragettes “des viragos moustachues, au regard farouches et décidé, qui, tout en copiant le

779 Margadant, *Madame le Professeur*, p.243, p. 242.

780 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 302.

disgracieux costume masculin, déclaraient une guerre implacable à l'homme."⁷⁸¹ She forcefully rejected "scientific proof" of women's inferiority in favour of an argument of equilibrium in difference, with the woman being "la force plus reposée, moins brutale, elle est la Vie enfermée dans la courbe adorables des lignes; elle est le rythme et la musique, la grace indicible, l'épanouissement, le triomphe de la chair baignée d'ombre et de lumière."⁷⁸² A few months earlier she argued it was necessary for women to retain their sweetness and mocked "les féministes qui exagèrent" who consider men the enemy and wear masculine clothing. Her tone suggests she is amused rather than threatened by "Ces chères combattantes!"⁷⁸³

An exam question for secondary school girls in June 1916 proposed this question on what feminism was.

Un écrivain moderne a dit 'il y a deux sortes de féministes: les vrai amis des femmes, ceux qui veulent leur donner le beau rôle dans l'humanité, c'est-à-dire la prépondérance par l'intelligence et le cœur; les faux amis qui désirent en faire des avocats et des députés'. Vous expliquerez cette réflexion et vous donnerez votre avis personnel sur cette question.⁷⁸⁴

The 20 students who took the test all agreed with the writer. They argued that the role of women was determined by nature and it was to be mothers, to raise children and to support and encourage their husbands.⁷⁸⁵

Traditionalist ideas also permeated any discussions of the role of women in society. When the *Petit Marseillais* wrote an article advocating giving women the vote, it printed two letters from female readers in response. The first claimed that the vote would be an unwelcome distraction from domestic duty. The second disagreed, claiming that the uniquely feminine characteristics of women would mean that their vote would have a beneficial effect on the country.⁷⁸⁶ Laura Downs points out that "the unpleasant discovery of the male production worker's relative and arbitrary

781 *La Bataille*, 22 August, 1917.

782 *La Bataille*, 22 August, 1917.

783 *La Bataille*, 23 March, 1917.

784 Françoise Lelièvre and Claude Lelièvre, *Histoire de la scolarisation des filles*. Paris: Nathan (1991) p. 123.

785 Lelièvre, Lelièvre, *Histoire de la scolarisation des filles*, pp. 123-125.

786 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 20 February, 1917; 1 March, 1917.

privilege rarely produced a movement for equal pay.” Instead women merely sought to work harder.⁷⁸⁷ When women did demand extra pay it was as substitutes for their husbands, not as a fair reward for their own labour: “As our husbands are all at the front, we have a right to the same wages as the men.”⁷⁸⁸ Jeannine called on her female readers to become *marraines*

Pour la marraine, c’est la joie d’accomplir une belle mission, c’est comprendre son rôle de femme pendant la guerre. N’est-ce pas très femme de dorloter les peines, d’encourager, de choyer, d’être maternelle, de sourire, de se faire gaie afin de chasser les tristes ombres qui dansent leur ronde autour du poilu.⁷⁸⁹

Marcelle Capy, writing in the self-proclaimed feminist journal *La Vague* on the subject of soldiers returning after the war pointed out the difficulties for women who lacked a returning husband, but also unquestioningly accepted that those whose husbands did return would return to the household.

Voici l’hiver. La famille ouvrière a besoin de charbon, de vêtements, de lumière, de nourriture. Si le mari était rentré de la guerre, il pourrait aller à l’usine et la femme reste à la maison. Mais le mari est toujours soldat, et la femme est toujours obligée de conduire la barque.⁷⁹⁰

Similarly, Jeannine quoted a correspondent who argued that women who became municipal councillors or entered careers lost their grace and feminine charm. Instead they should stay at home, seeking to make it comfortable and attractive. She agreed with him in theory, believing that but for a few exceptions the true vocation of a woman was to occupy the family home. However the modern world made this often impossible.⁷⁹¹ Again, feminism seems to have entailed simply recognition that the ideal role for women could not always be achieved.

The prominent feminist Cécile Brunshwig, speaking at a meeting of the Ligue des Droits de l’Homme, argued that the soul of women was incarnated through the family. “N’est-ce pas autour d’elle que dans chaque civilisation se groupe la famille?

787 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, pp. 59-60.

788 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, p. 142.

789 *La Bataille*, 3 January, 1917.

790 *La Vague*, 14 November, 1918.

N'est-ce pas elle dont la longue patience a défendu, au cours des siècles, l'intimité du foyer, la fragilité de l'enfance, la moralité de la jeunesse?"⁷⁹² She also joined feminist colleagues Julie Siegfried and Margueritte de Witt-Schlumberger in helping to found the natalist group *Pour la vie*.⁷⁹³ When women did act independently, they were at pains to point out their adherence to traditional norms of feminine modesty and virtue. The *Association française pour la Recherche des Disparus* claimed in an advertising flier that it had "poursuit sans ostentation depuis février 1915 son œuvre de secours moral."⁷⁹⁴

Jeannine encapsulated the views of much of French feminism in her article on *Le rôle social des Femmes*. She argued that women had shown their worth during the war, and could have a very beneficial part to play in public life. "Devenues pour un temps - ou pour toujours, hélas! - chefs de famille [...] leur faculté d'adaptation leur a permis d'entrer hardiment dans toutes les voies pour lesquelles il semblait qu'elles ne fussent point faites". Their contribution to public life would be rooted in their intrinsically feminine qualities.

Son action peut apporter d'immenses bienfaits dans nos sociétés imparfaites, car la femme est l'ennemie de la guerre inique, de toutes les abominations et des injustices qu'elle sent profondément.

Elle lutterait pour la disparition de l'alcoolisme et de la tuberculose; elle voudrait des lois plus équitables et serait une force dans les organisations qui combattent pour les causes vraiment humaines.⁷⁹⁵

Working-class women also rarely proved to be radically more feminist than their male counterparts. At a meeting of the metal workers union in Bourges in April 1918, the star speakers were Hélène Brion and Madeleine Vernet. According to the Police report, Brion's speech, which focused on feminism and on improving the position of women in society, "fut très écouté et souvent applaudi." However the audience of roughly 500 people was a largely male one. "Malgré le pressent appel aux ouvrières

791 *La Bataille*, 23 March, 1917.

792 *La Bataille*, 8 January, 1917.

793 Hause, Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics* p. 195.

794 AN F/23/1.

795 *La Bataille*, 1 March, 1917.

pour assister en grand nombre à cette réunion une quarantaine ne femmes à peine se trouvaient dans la salle.”⁷⁹⁶

When female journalists wrote for newspapers they rarely took radical positions and whatever the newspapers thought of the potential changes that might be wrought in women’s place in society during the war, they made little concession to them in their articles directed at women. In the *Petite Gironde*, the only feature that was directed at women was an occasional column, entitled the *Carnet de la Femme*, that concentrated on fashion, perfume, beauty and similarly feminine concerns. A typical beginning to a *Carnet* article referred to the “multiples travaux que nous exécutons pour nos combats: ceintures tricotées, chaussettes, chandails, mitaines, gants, plastrons, etc.” One article began “On nous reproche parfois, peut-être - (tout arrive...) - de nos occuper de toilettes et de beauté à des heures douloureuses.” They rejected this of course, but devoted that article primarily to boosting marraines organisations.⁷⁹⁷ This was the only diversion towards any new developments that might have affected its readership. *La Semaine Féminine* in the *Petit Parisien* followed a similar line.

In an article in *La Bataille* entitled *Pour les Petiots*, Jeannine sought to distance her paper from that of the bourgeoisie, claiming that the *Bataille* was not a journal of fashion and that neither she nor her readers cared about what the aristocracy were wearing. However she thought that mothers might make an exception for their babies. “Vous avez toutes, j’en suis sûre, la coquetterie de vos enfants, et comme vous avez raison.”⁷⁹⁸ Moreover, *La Bataille* also ran occasional articles by Jehanne la Chaperonnière, which focused on clothes, and these were the only articles, other than the ones seeking marraines, which addressed themselves directly to women.

The only exception to this tendency of articles aimed at women to address them simply as domesticated housewives was the conservative *L’Ouest-Éclair*, in which Marthe Dupuy offered several articles calling for greater rights for women in recognition of what they had achieved during the war. However, these articles stopped appearing after 1916, and the newspaper brought in a regular column entitled

⁷⁹⁶ AN F/12/8023, 22 April 1918.

⁷⁹⁷ *La Petite Gironde*, 1 August, 1916.

“Pour les Menagères” which represented its only content written either by, or explicitly for, women.⁷⁹⁹

Consistency of Attitudes

From the material given, it would be easy to think that the debate over the behaviour of women and their place in society was omnipresent in French discourse. Instead, it was largely peripheral. Newspapers only occasionally dealt with women; the reports by the regional committees assigned to oversee the administration of the war were virtually silent on the issue. Paul Cambon barely mentioned women in his wartime correspondence, except for an occasional comment about the malign influence upon the Tsar of his wife, which was, he sadly noted, a far from unprecedented state of affairs.⁸⁰⁰ As Thébaud notes “[a]fter the arms fell silent, tens of thousands of books were written in the hope of understanding the extraordinary events just past. [...] In all this post-war writing, however, there was little discussion of women.”⁸⁰¹ When journalists did address women it was often as light relief from the serious issues of the war. In *La Petite Gironde*, Berthelot noted that proposals to grant female suffrage included restricting voting to women aged over thirty. “Mais, candidates parlementaires, il n’y a pas une jeune femme qui, pour la plaisir d’aller faire queue à la porte de la mairie pendant une heure, consentira à reconnaître qu’elle a passé la trentaine!”⁸⁰² For Jules Vérant in *L’Eclair du Midi*, women were a regular source of lighthearted material. When it was announced that no dress would measure more than four and a half metres he commented

Ne vous effrayez pas, mesdames, on ne songe pas à vous imposer un uniforme national. Vous pourrez continuer, l’hiver prochain, à vous habiller comme vous voudrez et ce sera toujours charmant, j’en suis sûr. Mais... oh! ne tremblez pas! ...⁸⁰³

⁷⁹⁸ *La Bataille*, 24 July, 1916.

⁷⁹⁹ For examples of Dupuy’s articles, see *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 28 April 1916, 5 May, 1916. Pour les Menagères began on 7 June, 1917.

⁸⁰⁰ Cambon, *Correspondance*, p. 158.

⁸⁰¹ Thébaud, “The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division” p. 22.

⁸⁰² *La Petite Gironde*, 24 January, 1919.

⁸⁰³ *L’Eclair du Midi*, 12 September, 1917.

When the clocks changed “Nous connaissons déjà le mois où les femmes parlaient le moins, qui est le mois de février, parce qu’il n’a que 28 jours. Nous saurons maintenant quel est le jour où elles auront le plus parlé...”⁸⁰⁴

Zette, writing in *Hors d’œuvre*, commented on a judge who was faced with 55 cases of defamation or slander, all between women. The judge inquired if the Union Sacrée applied to women. “Et faut-il que les femmes se gourment entre elles pendant que leurs maris unissent leurs forces contre l’ennemi commun?” Zette argued that the reason for this was “La femme a des nerfs: en temps de paix, elle passait ses nerfs sur son mari, et la chose allait rarement devant les tribunaux de répression. Depuis la guerre, la femme, plus nerveuse et plus justement nerveuse, est obligée de passer ses nerfs sur ses amies et voisines.” The way to deal with it was to employ the methods of schoolmasters as if the women were children.⁸⁰⁵ The *ambulancier*, Germain Balard, explained moral dislocation arising from the war as due to women being “portées naturellement par leurs instincts”.⁸⁰⁶

Even serious issues like the strikes of the midinettes and then the couturiers in 1917 were treated as amusing diversions by *L’Eclair du Midi*.⁸⁰⁷ *L’Ouest-Éclair* headlined news stories on the strikes alongside little cartoons, presumably to indicate the essential frivolousness of the topic.⁸⁰⁸ The next occasion that similar cartoons were featured was the first instalment of “Pour les Menagères”, a very traditionalist column offering practical advice to housewives.⁸⁰⁹ At the front, Kahn shared their casual attitude, writing

Quant aux manifestations hystériques des ouvrières parisiennes, encore une fois, je les considère sans le moindre importance. Elles s’agitent parce que les printemps les énerve et qu’elles ne trouvent pas assez d’hommes pour le satisfaire.⁸¹⁰

804 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 1 October, 1916.

805 *L’Œuvre*, 28 June, 1916.

806 quoted in Le Naour, *Misères et tourments*, p. 324.

807 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 26 May, 1917, 9 June, 1917.

808 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 20 May 1917.

809 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 7 June 1917.

810 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, p. 275.

The most noticeable constant in these comments is the traditional idea of women that informs them. The apparent resistance to significant modification of pre-war attitudes to gender relations appears repeatedly. In the French army, a regimental order of the day in August 1916 commanded soldiers not to use language that might offend the sensibilities of women employed by the regiment, while Veran joked about General Pershing's admonition to the American troops never to tell anything confidential to a woman.⁸¹¹ *L'Eclair du Midi* reprinted advice given by the Turin section of the General Union of Professors on how women should behave during war, claiming it was very wise. This advice was wholly consistent with an eternal idea of womanhood: don't gossip, do not be swayed by alarmists, do not overspend, think about loved ones, not to complain, make yourself useful, admire the soldiers, be patient, and suffer stoically.⁸¹²

The irrationality and sentimentality of women continued to be primary themes when the actions of females were examined. According to *La Dépêche*, the women who had been granted the vote in the US prior to the 1916 election were expected to vote for Wilson because "les femmes inclinant à approuver celui-ci d'avoir évité la guerre aux Etats-Unis, même au prix d'humiliations nationales."⁸¹³ Ferri-Pisani wrote in his book on the United States how Wilson had "seduced" women into voting for him by "le romanesque de sa vie privée et son sobriquet de 'great lover'".⁸¹⁴ The discussion in *L'Ouest-Éclair* on how the female voters of Illinois would vote in the 1916 election was predicated on a belief in the innate pacifism and sentimentality of women. "Logiquement, les quatre millions de suffrages féminins devraient aller au candidat socialiste [because he was the pacifist candidate]. Mais il faut compter – et largement – avec le sentiment."⁸¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, the emotional behaviour of the female US deputy who voted against the war was remarked upon negatively and indicatively.

In *La Dépêche*, Pierre Mille argued

811 *La Petite Gironde*, 25 August, 1916, *L'Eclair du Midi*, 6 February, 1918.

812 *L'Eclair du Midi*, 10 January, 1917.

813 *La Dépêche*, 1 November, 1916.

814 Ferri-Pisani, *L'Intérêt et l'idéal des États-Unis*, p. 131

815 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 7 November 1916.

Cette manière de raisonner portait surtout sur les femmes – on avait institué des parlottes des femmes. Quand les femmes se mêlent de généraliser, certaines le font avec une angélique et terrible esprit de simplification. Celles-là sont mal capable d’analyser les mots et voir ce qu’il y a dessous. Elles les prennent en bloc et logomachisent avec sentiment.⁸¹⁶

In his letters home, André Kahn pondered on the possible reasons for the conversion to Catholicism of a woman called Marcelle. “Est-ce le fruit d’un amour malheureux? Une crise de mysticisme hystérique?”⁸¹⁷ That her decision could have been made through any sort of rational thinking doesn’t appear to occur to him. Eventually he finds a satisfactory answer in the malign influence of a priest.⁸¹⁸

The conservative *L’Eclair du Midi* waged a consistent battle against the popularity of the cinema during the war, arguing that it could have a corrupting influence on weak minds. Jules Veran found a perfect illustration of this in a murder carried out by two young women, aged 16 and 20. Questioned by a psychiatrist “Ses bourreaux en jupons - la langue française, trop galante n’a pas de féminin pour ce mot...” revealed that they were “toquées sur lesquelles avaient agi fâcheusement les films policiers donnés par les cinémas.”⁸¹⁹

In *La Petite Gironde*, Berthelot responded to a paper offered to l’Académie des sciences by the prominent work scientist Jules Amar.

La conclusion de M. Amar est logique, les désordres physiologiques et moraux dont la société portera un jour le poids viendront de l’utilisation défectueuse des aptitudes chez la femme. Il est donc nécessaire de classer les femmes d’après leurs aptitudes physiologiques et psychologiques, et d’écarter de leur travail toutes circonstances où l’effort et l’émotion ont chance d’être fréquents.

Berthelot pointed out the difficulty of removing women from all areas where emotion and effort are required.⁸²⁰ Amar himself argued that

816 *La Dépêche*, 3 September, 1917.

817 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, pp. 108-109 It is not specified who Marcelle is but she is clearly well known to Kahn and his correspondent, and seems to be a relative.

818 Kahn, *Journal de Guerre d’un Juif Patriote*, p. 114.

819 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 1 May, 1916.

820 *La Petite Gironde*, 5 January, 1919.

Il n'y a pas, entre l'homme et la femme, une différence de degré intellectuel, de puissance cérébrale, de *quantité d'énergie psychique*; c'est tout simplement une question de *qualité*: les modalités du travail cérébral ne sont pas identiques. Ici, pour la femme, l'ordre sensitif l'emporte; il s'est imposé par l'habitude et l'hérédité. Là – pour l'homme – c'est, au contraire, l'ordre abstrait de la raison et de la pensée; en vertu de cette abstraction même, il s'établit une indépendance relative des fonctions motrices à l'égard des actions extérieures, et c'est ce que traduit le mot *volonté*. [...] Pour en revenir au cerveau humain, il semble difficile de tirer un enseignement quelconque de son poids, de ses replis, de son architectonique. L'examen de cet organe n'a permis de rien conclure, non plus, quant à la race; il a le même poids moyen chez les Australiens, Indiens, Chinois, Japonais et Malais que chez les Européens. Celui des nègres est, toutefois, moins massif et moins dense. Mais aucun rapport réel entre la quantité et la qualité, entre les facteurs mécaniques et les facteurs psychiques. Les races, comme les individus, comme les deux sexes, ne présentent aucun indice cérébral visible de leur inégalité intellectuelle.⁸²¹

Amar's argument is very significant. Not only is he restating the conventional idea that men have the capacity to utilise abstract thought while women rely on an instinct, but he is giving it the weight of scientific fact. Moreover, by arguing that the difference between men and women's intellect cannot be measured by the quantity of psychic energy, or by any visible indicator from the brain, Amar effectively renders his judgement unfalsifiable. If only outward manifestations of intellect can illuminate questions of intellectual equality or inequality, then it becomes still harder to combat preconceptions. Amar's argument also provides another example of the frequent comparison of relations between the sexes to relations between the races.

Paul Cambon, talking about bombing raids in London, praised French women for being calmer in a crisis than their English equivalents, but nevertheless noted that there was a tendency amongst women to become emotional for no good reason. The usual calmness of English women by contrast was dismissed as intellectual inertia.

Il est curieux de constater combien les femmes anglaises sont inférieures aux nôtres au point de vue de la résistance morale et du sang-froid. Chez nous on crie pour des riens, mais on se calme quand la situation devient grave. Ici la silence et la tranquillité ordinaires des femmes ne sont qu'une signe d'inertie intellectuelle et aussitôt le danger déclaré elles perdent la tête. Nous avons un lot de

⁸²¹ Jules Amar, *Organisation Physiologique du Travail*, Paris: Dunod & Pinat (1917) pp. 43-44. Emphasis in the original.

dactylographes françaises qui conservent leur bonne humeur pendant la canonnade, et ne s'embarrassent pas de rentrer chez elles pendant la raid.⁸²²

J.H. Rosny offered an equally backhanded compliment when advocating that women should be allowed into juries and to become magistrates. Rosny looked at Balzac and other such writers and agreed that women were indeed capricious and irresponsible, but that men were not doing much of a job at providing impartial justice either.⁸²³

Indeed, praise for women took as conservative a form as did criticism or humour. In July 1916, Raymond Poincaré rendered homage to the women of France:

A vous surtout, Mesdames, j'adresse les remerciements émus et respectueux du pays. Vous avez montré ce qu'il y a chez la femme française de flamme intérieure et d'élévation morale; vous avez prouvé une fois de plus qu'elle demeure à jamais la sûre gardienne de nos traditions et l'inspiratrice des grandes vertus populaires.⁸²⁴

For Maurice Donnay "Si les hommes sont partis pour combattre l'envahisseur, aussitôt les femmes se mobilisent pour combattre la souffrance, la misère et la douleur."⁸²⁵ Despite his jokes about women voting, Paul Berthelot actually advocated female suffrage because

La femme sera la bonne marraine qui apportera dans la lutte avec la misère, avec l'alcoolisme, avec la tuberculose, le sentiment très précis des réalités, la connaissance profonde des divers cas et espèces, et aussi cette délicatesse de doigté qui donne la confiance au malheureux et au malade, et en lui rendant l'espoir assure le succès. [...] La grande famille française, tout comme notre foyer, a besoin de gardiennes ferventes, agiles et clairvoyantes.

Elles sauront faire face à leurs responsabilités nouvelles. Le bulletin de vote, dans leurs petites mains, ne sera pas un joujou, mais comme dit la bon Coppée, 'Un outil de travail, une arme de combat' pour le bon combat contre toutes les déchéances, pour le mieux être sinon pour le bonheur de tous.⁸²⁶

Camille Mauclair in *La Dépêche*

⁸²² Cambon, *Correspondance*, pp. 202-3.

⁸²³ *La Dépêche*, 20 July, 1917.

⁸²⁴ quoted in Donnay, preface, Mellor, *Pages Inédites sur La Femme et la Guerre*, p. 15.

⁸²⁵ Donnay, preface, Mellor, *Pages Inédites sur La Femme et la Guerre*, p. 17.

⁸²⁶ *La Petite Gironde*, 24 May, 1919.

Depuis trois ans et demi. La femme isolée a singulièrement progressé et mûri. Elle s'est grandie dans l'estime nationale par la façon énergique et intelligente dont elle a accepté et rempli les tâches de l'homme absent. Cette conduite a plus fait pour la cause du féminisme que vingt ans de revendications théoriques. L'expérience est là. Il semblerait juste, naturel et utile que la femme conquière l'électorat et bien d'autres privilèges sociaux. Mais s'il y faut applaudir, il n'en faut pas moins craindre que la force d'une telle évolution détourne de plus en plus la femme de son ancien rôle, redevenu primordial: l'amour et la fécondité au foyer.⁸²⁷

Jeannine argued that women should be given the vote because "... l'activité qu'elles sauraient déployer dans les œuvres sociales et dans la confection de lois justes a plus de profit que profitable à tous."⁸²⁸

One excellent source for ideas about female abilities is the collection of depositions given to an extraparliamentary commission on the organisation of secondary education for girls that reported in 1918. Nearly 50 oral depositions were given from a wide variety of sources.⁸²⁹

The commission began from a starting point of rejecting the "radical" idea of giving girls the same syllabus and same diploma as boys. It argued that such a "complete assimilation" would be contrary to the law of 1880. Not only that but it would display a failure to recognise the real aptitudes of women. Not only would such a move go against the true interests of society, it was contrary to nature itself. To push all young women towards the baccalauréat would be to create a female intellectual proletariat."⁸³⁰

Though most of those invited to give their opinions agreed with this, there were occasional dissenting voices. Mme. Cruppi, the President of the section lettres-sciences du Conseil national des femmes françaises argued that schools for girls should offer same qualifications as for boys. M. Brunot, a professor from the Sorbonne also argued strongly in favour of equal education for both sexes. He argued

⁸²⁷ *La Dépêche*, 17 March, 1918.

⁸²⁸ *La Bataille*, 10 May, 1917.

⁸²⁹ Rapport de la Commission extraparlementaire chargée d'examiner les modifications à apporter à l'organisation des études et aux sanctions de l'enseignement secondaire public des jeunes filles. (1918)

that it was necessary to open to women every career to which they might “legitimately aspire.” Unlike the vast majority of participants, Brunot mentioned the war as having played a part in his thinking arguing that “ce qui n’était qu’un devoir avant la guerre pourra devenir une obligation.” However, he is not arguing that the war had opened his eyes to the qualities of women, but taking the common line that women’s efforts during the conflict demanded a reward.⁸³¹

M. Bernès, a member of the Conseil supérieur de l’instruction publique, was slightly more equivocal, arguing in favour of offering an equivalent programme of studies for girls as boys in secondary schools, but claiming that he didn’t envisage many girls taking the baccalauréat.⁸³²

The majority of the responses emphasised traditional feminine roles though. The Inspector-General of l’instruction publique, M. Cahen, argued that the aim of the school was to create good republican mothers, evoking the motto of the École de Sèvres: *Virgines futuras virorum matres respublica docet*.⁸³³ He argued that a similar educational workload to boys would be too demanding, intellectually and physically for women, and that space needed to be reserved for teaching them women’s work.

On n’en doit pas conclure que l’éducation des jeunes filles doit ressembler tout à fait à celle des garçons. La préparation simultanée de deux ou trois examens, diplôme, brevet supérieur, baccalauréat, place les jeunes filles dans des conditions très fâcheuses au point de vue de l’hygiène intellectuelle et physique. [...] Une place doit être réservée aux travaux féminins, en particulier à la couture et à tous les arts qui s’y rattachent.⁸³⁴

M. Darlu, an inspector general of public education, also claimed that the two sexes had different needs in education, more technical for boys and more general for girls.⁸³⁵

Mlle. Milliard, a member of the Conseil supérieur de l’instruction publique argued that, from the ages of 7 to 11, girls should be taught to develop their moral and social side, and learn about hygiene and good housekeeping. “c’est à l’âge où la jeune fille

830 Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire, June 1917, pp. 2-3

831 Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire, February 1917, p. 34, p. 38.

832 Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire February 1917, pp. 28-29.

833 Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire, January 1917, p. 20.

834 Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire January 1917, pp. 20-21.

est la plus malléable qu'il faut accentuer le caractère féminin de l'enseignement qu'elle reçoit." From 11 onwards, different programmes should be available for girls who wished to take the baccalauréat in order to enter certain careers, for others who wanted to work in commerce or industry, while a third programme should be available for girls who wanted to look after children, the sick and so on.⁸³⁶

One of the members of the commission, Senator Lintilhac, wondered what was wrong with allowing any girl who was interested to take the baccalauréat as "il y voit l'avantage de diminuer certains paresse et d'éveiller certains curiosités." Milliard responded by arguing that many young girls are badly informed about the possibilities offered to them by possessing the diploma and "elle craint le snobisme et l'inutilité social d'efforts qui pourraient être mieux employés à l'acquisition d'une culture différente et tout aussi bonne que celle du baccalauréat."⁸³⁷

Mme. Suran-Mabire, a lycée professeur in Marseille and also a vice-President of the Fédération nationale des professeurs de lycée et du personnel de l'enseignement secondaire féminin, suggested a regional dimension by noting that in the small towns girls were happy with the diploma and fearful of studying Latin and the baccalauréat, while in Paris and the big cities they demanded the baccalauréat.⁸³⁸

Various women working as lycée professeurs were invited to give their opinions, and they offered a wide range of opinions. Mlle. Couvreur, argued that the majority of the female population in lycées should not be educated "dans le sens de l'éducation masculine.", while Mlle. Dugard, argued that "Il est indispensable de mettre les jeunes filles en état d'assurer leur existence et, le cas échéant, celle de leur famille; il faut les préparer aux fonctions que les hommes ne peuvent ou ne veulent plus remplir."⁸³⁹

Mlle. Amieux, a lycée directrice, suggested that boys should be taught maths and physics while "les futures mères auront plutôt besoin des sciences naturelles", but

835 Rapport de la Commission extraparlementaire, February 1917, p. 49, June 1917, p. 105.

836 Rapport de la Commission extraparlementaire, February 1917, p. 36

837 Rapport de la Commission extraparlementaire, February 1917, p. 37

838 Rapport de la Commission extraparlementaire, June 1917, p. 111.

839 Rapport de la Commission extraparlementaire, February 1917, p. 48

Mlle. Picot, a professeur disagreed, claiming that she had encountered plenty of female pupils who had a taste for maths, which they could do as well as their brothers and which made them no less charming as wives or excellent as mothers.”⁸⁴⁰ Despite the clear differences though, the underlying theme remains that the primary aim of education for girls should be to prepare them for matrimony and maternity and that if they were forced to make a living it would only be in work that men no longer were available for. They also echo the ideas transmitted in the speeches of the *institutrices* studied by Margadant, as discussed above.

M. Goy, a senator on the commission offered the most traditional response, arguing that the exigencies of war had driven women to take the place of men in many situations “n’y aura t-elle pas contracté des idées d’indépendance qui relâcheront les liens de la famille qui lui feront oublier le devoir le plus sacré, celui de la maternité” This tendency for women to forget their primary function needed to be halted, or else natality would drop. Additionally, Goy argued women were not of the required intelligence. They lacked intellectual power, and it was essential not to encumber France’s faculties with “étudiants médiocres, incapables d’augmenter le patrimoine intellectuel de la nation.”⁸⁴¹

Despite attitudes like this amongst members of the commission, a proposal to forbid girls from taking the baccalauréat was generally opposed. “On opposa des raisons de droit constitutionnel, on invoqua le libéralisme traditionnel de l’Université et l’utilité de laisser le choix aux jeunes filles entre un examen conçu pour elles et le baccalauréat des garçons;” Instead, the commission decided that the education given to girls by the current secondary system was “bonne dans l’ensemble”, and that they should seek to retain it “dans ses grandes lignes”.⁸⁴²

The views of the commission as to educational priorities were shared elsewhere. The subcommittee of economic action in the Correze also argued that it was necessary to urgently organise “enseignement ménager” in the region.

⁸⁴⁰ Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire, June 1917, p. 118, p. 120.

⁸⁴¹ Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire, June 1917, p. 105-106.

Ayons moins de femmes savants dont les connaissances sont souvent superflues et efforçons nous de posséder dans nos jeunes filles des légions de bonnes ménagères n'ayant pas peur de la besogne, aptes à tirer profit pour le mieux de tout ce don't elles pourront disposer et possédant déjà au sortir de l'école beaucoup de notions sur leurs futures devoirs d'épouses et de mères.⁸⁴³

In Michel Chassagny and G. Labarre's *Précis de physique*, designed for the secondary education of girls, they wrote how they had sought to exclude abstract reasoning and purely mathematical developments. Instead "[n]ous avons constamment donné pour base aux différentes théories des expériences aussi simples que démonstratives..."⁸⁴⁴

These educational ideas were not restricted to France's metropole. Guidelines set out for the teaching of girls in French Indochina advised that they should have the same programmes of teaching as the boys, but only half as much time should be allocated to it, with the other half devoted to domestic education, "l'enseignement ménager". In addition, it was advised that their regular lessons be taught so as to adapt to their domestic education. Young girls needed to be taught through practical demonstration and application what could be taught to boys more theoretically.⁸⁴⁵

It was concluded that it was necessary to teach young girls

l'hygiène, la morale et la politesse en insistant suivant l'âge des élèves sur les devoirs de la fille, de la sœur aînée, de la femme, de la mère, de la maîtresse de maison et en ne négligeant aucune occasion de redresser les notions grossières (préjugés ou superstitions) qui obscurcissent si souvent les cerveaux féminins;⁸⁴⁶

It was noted that the principles of morality were not really very different between young Indochinese girls and their French equivalents. The ultimate aim of the education of these girls was to prepare them to become homemakers, and it was

842 Rapport de la Commission extraparlamentaire, p. 154, p. 169.

843 AN F/12/8003, 27 January, 1916.

844 Michel Chassagny, G. Labarre; *Précis de physique*, Paris: Hachette (1914/1919), preface.

845 *Directions Pédagogiques pour l'enseignement donné aux jeunes filles indigènes dans les écoles régionales de provinces*. Saigon: J. Viêt (1917) pp. 3-4

846 *Directions Pédagogiques*, p. 5

claimed that their aim was to ensure each one of their students became “une maîtresse de maison.”⁸⁴⁷

Advertisements remained particularly traditional, with women depicted as housewives, nurses, or consumers of medical products, or else as potential customers for the latest fashion. Men appeared as tradesmen, professionals or soldiers. One of many possible examples is a Globéol advert from 1917 where a male patient was depicted being attended to by a solicitous female nurse, who was supervised by two male doctors.⁸⁴⁸ An advert for Pilules Pink asserted that women were “êtres faibles” and often were hiding suffering behind their smile. Their blood was poor and they risked losing their “charme naturel”. Thus they needed to take the Pilules Pink.⁸⁴⁹ In an advert for Malt Kneipp, an alternative to coffee, a couple were receiving counselling for their relationship. The husband was “coléreux, jaloux”, the wife “nerveuse, emportée”. The counsellor advised them their problems were due to the coffee, but the characteristics of the spouses were entirely consistent with traditional stereotypes.⁸⁵⁰ An advert for a medical product claimed that, far from living the high life, “Trop souvent les mères et épouses commettent une erreur en se sacrifiant continuellement pour les autres.”⁸⁵¹

It was not just commercial imagery: official posters followed a similar line. A poster advertising a “Journée du Poilu” in the Val d’Oise in December 1915 depicted a young boy in military garb and his slightly elder sister dressed as a nurse requesting money so their father could come home on leave.⁸⁵²

847 *Directions Pédagogiques*, p. 6, p. 11

848 *Lyon Republicain*, 6 March, 1917.

849 *La Petite Gironde*, 8 January, 1916.

850 *Lyon Republicain*, 20 June, 1917.

851 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 9 April, 1919.

852 Serge Lesmanne, “L’école et la guerre” in Marcel Lachiver (ed.) *Contribution à l’histoire de Val d’Oise. Aspects de la guerre 1914-1918*. Pontoise: Société Historique de Pontoise (1986) p. 283.

Conclusion

In its first issue after the armistice, *La Vague* featured a large cartoon on its front page.⁸⁵³ Bright sunshine signified the new dawn, as did the dove with an olive branch. In the foreground a man destroyed a cannon with his hammer. Behind him a soldier comforted his wife and daughter. In the background a man ploughed the earth and factories belched smoke. It was an utterly traditional picture, in which gender roles were wholly unproblematic. Men worked and protected their families, women looked after their children. That the avowedly feminist *Vague* saw this as an ideal post-war scenario demonstrates the limited nature of the impact the revolutionary behaviour of women during the war had.

An article entitled *La libération de la femme* by Arthur Lauba offers an excellent illustration and bears quoting at some length. He argued that women had been oppressed ignominiously, but that when the war called on them to replace men, they “ont remplacé parfaitement les hommes”.

Donc, assez d'égoïsme a fait souffrir la femme, aujourd'hui sa libération totale est devenue inéluctable; plus de femmes-servantes, des femmes-soeurs. Si nous voulons vraiment empêcher le retour des abominations actuelles, libérons la glorieuse femme, reine de la maternité, des tutelles odieuses qui trop longtemps l'asservirent au détriment des intérêts supérieures de la société.

However, the liberation of women did not involve their having a post-war role similar to men, despite their ability to replace men.

Aux hommes les labeurs de forces musculaires; à la femme, le labeur sacré de la féconde maternité, de la vie sacrée qui perpétue le genre humain. Si la femme n'est pas à nos côtés avec égalité de droits et de devoirs, la lutte contre l'alcoolisme, contre le militarisme et toutes les hideuses plaies sociales, sera vaine. Elle seule, mère sublime, pourra régénérer les hommes, car c'est elle qui peut déposer dans la coeur de l'enfant les premiers ferments de liberté et d'amour. Aujourd'hui, les tergiversations ne sont plus de mise, l'heure est aux actes qui, seuls, font poids, la femme doit être rendue à la liberté. Autant pour elle que pour nous, la dépendance économique doit être supprimée. Et la femme, rendue à la plénitude de ses moyens, sera la mère respectée qui, dégagée de tous les préjugés imbéciles qui

853 *La Vague*, 14 November, 1918.

entravent l'essor du genre humain, nous donnera des fils auxquels elle apprendra l'amour et inculquera la haine de tous les tyrans et la révolte contre toutes les oppressions.

Si nous voulons tuer la guerre, libérons définitivement la femme.”⁸⁵⁴

For Lauba the war had not undermined his belief in the complementary nature of men and women; it had reinforced it. The liberation that women had earned was the freedom to exercise their maternal role on a national scale.

As Margaret Darrow has argued, “What women did in the war or what was done to them by the war was explained – and explained away – as minor adaptations of a traditional feminine destiny.”⁸⁵⁵ Any changes in women's behaviour due to the war were believed to be only temporary, with the expectation that a return to normality in other aspects of life would see a return to traditional behaviour. For Henri Drouin this even applied to sexuality when, writing in the 1920s, he excused lesbianism as a natural response to the absence of men in the aftermath of the war. He explained it as a transient phenomenon though, and illustrated it with the tale of a young woman who had taken a female lover. Guilty and anxious, she had consulted a doctor, who claimed that it was a natural response to her circumstances, and one that would pass. His conclusion was immediately supported by the woman declaring her love for him.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵⁴ *La Bataille*, 18 September, 1916.

⁸⁵⁵ Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, p. 5.

⁸⁵⁶ quoted in Hanna, “Nativity, Homosexuality, and the Controversy over Corydon” p. 219.

CHAPTER 4 – Gender, Race and Employment

Before the war, a substantial number of women and foreigners had paid employment in the French economy. Foreign workers were almost exclusively European, and were largely considered as just a slightly cheaper, slightly inferior, alternative to French male manual labour. The value of non-white labour was considered negligible, on the rare occasions that it was considered at all. By contrast, women were extensively utilised but this employment was restricted to certain sectors, considered suited to their unique abilities.

The two primary areas of female employment before the war were domestic service and textile and clothes production. The war saw women having to take on a wide range of other jobs, often ones that would have been inconceivable for them in peacetime. In general, women were felt to have dealt adequately with these jobs and they were often praised for their efforts in keeping the economy going throughout the war. However, the prevailing ideas of how women could and should be employed remained strongly in place, despite the challenge created by different female working practices. These ideas included: a belief that women workers should always be below male workers in the hierarchy of any place of employment; that women's skills largely came naturally to them while men could be trained in a variety of skills; and that women's work outside the home was always likely to be better, the closer it came to replicating the work they did inside the home. When women were considered to have excelled in any area of employment during the war, then that work would be defined as one in keeping with traditional female skills. Where this was not possible, it was usually argued that women had made a brave effort to act as an adequate stop-gap while men were unavailable, but that in the long-term they would be unable to carry out work for which they were unsuited and that they would return to their traditional roles.

Laura Downs's study of the metallurgy industry is instructive. Comparing the British and French war experience, she concludes that there was a very similar response. The war brought about an industrial reorganisation, the development of new techniques, and changes in the work force; introducing a new, sexual division into the workplace.

However, although hierarchies were restructured, tasks were still assigned on the basis of male/female difference.

Il en résulta une inégalité structurelle, considérée à la fois comme inévitable et économiquement rationnelle, inscrite dans le marbre des différences “naturelles” et exprimée dans le langage des qualifications, désormais sexué.⁸⁵⁷

In both countries, employers tried to define three areas accessible to women. Unskilled work, where women worked alongside young boys; semi-skilled work on a machine or an assembly line, where the majority of work was undertaken by women; and finally skilled work. The first two were uncontroversial; it was only skilled work that saw male opposition and “la capacité (et le droit) des femmes à accomplir ce travail était vivement discuté.”⁸⁵⁸ The opposition of male workers was only aroused when employment in relatively highly paid or high status work was at stake. The debate remained muted by the limited number of skilled female workers around.

The aptitude showed by the female workforce at the repetitive, but often intricate work of assembly or in the operation of machinery was easily assimilated into prevailing images of womanhood. In 1918, G. Rageot wrote in *La Française dans la guerre*

Les machines qu’elles dirigent travaillent comme celles des hommes, mais d’un rythme plus régulier, semble-t-il plus continu, à cause de la douceur de leur mouvements et de leur vigilance. Il reste de la ménagère dans la tournesse d’obus et les femmes font de la métallurgie comme du tricot.⁸⁵⁹

There was much wishful thinking in this analogy, but nevertheless it correlates closely with the divisions made within the factory. During “... la guerre, des ouvriers des deux sexes étaient parfois retirés des postes répétitifs et promus dans l’atelier d’outillage, pour un travail polyvalent.” After the war the division between repetitive work (feminine) and multi skilled work (masculine) was affirmed.

857 Laura Lee Downs, “‘Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys’: Division sexuelle et travail dans la métallurgie, (France et Angleterre, 1914-1939)” *Annales* 54-3, May-June, (1999) p. 562.

858 Downs, ‘Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys’ pp. 570-572.

859 Downs, ‘Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys’ p. 574.

De fait, dans le débat sur les qualifications qui s'installe après 1916, la distinction entre polyvalence et savoir-faire répétitif était devenue un fossé infranchissable: les qualités 'intrinsèques' exigées par l'une sont tenues pour incompatibles avec celles que demande l'autre.⁸⁶⁰

Downs gives several examples of how roles in the workforce were assigned on the basis of perceived gender roles "L'agitation permanente de l'homme - précisément les qualités qui faisaient de certains hommes de bons mécaniciens qualifiés - faisaient obstacle à la capacité des moins qualifiés à exécuter convenablement les travaux répétitifs." Thus employers preferred women for unskilled tasks.⁸⁶¹ Pierre Hamp, an inspecteur de travail believed that the view of employers could be summed up thus:

Elle vérifie bien ce qui a toujours la même forme, où il suffit d'une répétition du regard, non d'une recherche. C'est la maille du crochet et de dentelle. Mais il ne faut pas demander à la femme un vigilance impromptue; elle parallélise, elle compare, elle n'invente pas.⁸⁶²

A gear making plant in Laon reported on the advantages that they found in employing women, who were "especially appreciated for their passivity and their dexterity in executing small motions". They noted also that when there were pauses in work, it was not unusual to see the women knitting, demonstrating their continued femininity.⁸⁶³

Employers noted the inability of women to deal with breakdowns in machinery. In male unskilled or semi-skilled workers this was simply seen as due to a lack of practical knowledge. In women it was considered a symptom of feminine "passivité".⁸⁶⁴ Georges Calmès reassured skilled men that

Mechanics who are worthy of the name ... who possess a love of craft and a taste for finished work demanding knowledge, intelligence, and some technical capacity - will never see a competitor in the woman lathe operator. That would be absurd.⁸⁶⁵

860 Downs, 'Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys' p. 582.

861 Downs, 'Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys' pp. 576-577.

862 Downs, 'Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys' p. 574.

863 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, p. 223.

864 Downs, 'Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys' p. 576.

865 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, p. 222.

The similarity of these judgements to those made in the pre-war period is striking and testifies to both the continuity and the adaptability of patriarchal discourse towards working women. In an essay that won a prize from the Académie Française in 1905, *Le Mensonge du féminisme*, Theodore Joran argued “Routine ton nom est femme; progrès, ton sexe est masculin.”⁸⁶⁶ Five years later Emile Faguet asserted that “L’immense majorité des professions civiles sont des routines que peuvent apprendre en quelques années les plus médiocres cerveaux féminins”. However he considered that women would never have the genius for intellectual activities.⁸⁶⁷

Some ideological adjustments had to be made. A French adage of the 19th century, “A l’homme les bois et les métaux, à la femme la famille et les tissus” would have seemed outdated, and the exigencies of the war did see some blurring of the boundaries.⁸⁶⁸ Nevertheless those boundaries were not seriously threatened, and were reasserted with some ease after the armistice.

A la fin de la guerre, la distinction des types de travail était devenue une distinction ancrée dans les personnes elles-mêmes. Les femmes non qualifiées étaient définies comme “des manœuvres d’une qualité un peu plus délicate”.⁸⁶⁹

Employers applied this distinction by giving unskilled women and men completely different roles in the production process. Downs stresses that this division was not a calculated plan by employers, but rather an application of their accepted ideas of sexual difference to the transformation of the technologies of the factory.⁸⁷⁰ This chapter will show that the durability of this thinking was not unique to the metalworking industry.

Attitudes to foreign labour had some similarities to views of female labour. The level of skills that foreign workers were believed to have varied depending on where they were from, with European workers considered to be much more skilled than non-white workers. What remained constant was that no foreign workers were considered

866 Mague, *L’Identité Masculine en crise* p. 28.

867 Mague, *L’Identité Masculine en crise*, p. 71.

868 Downs, ‘Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys’ p. 573.

869 Downs, ‘Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys’ p. 577.

870 Downs, ‘Boys will be Men and Girls will be Boys’ p.577, p. 584.

to have the technical skill of French workers. An article in *La Bataille Syndicaliste* dismissed Kabyle, Chinese and Annamite labour as “inept and mediocre.”⁸⁷¹ The *Alliance National pour l’Accroissement de la Population Française* was even more dismissive.

After having been flooded during the war with Kabyle street sweepers, Annamese stokers, Negro dockers, and Chinese labourers, whom we had to import because it was the best we could get, we were forced to send the majority of these worthless immigrants back to their faraway homelands. They were more disposed to pillage and thievery than serious labour. The re-establishment of the peace has permitted us to replace these ‘undesirables’ with our usual immigrants, the Italians and the Spaniards.⁸⁷²

It was also believed that foreign workers needed to be supervised by, and subservient to, French employees in order to work effectively.

Unlike women, foreign workers were not believed to be better suited to certain tasks than male French workers; they were always considered to be a makeshift substitute for French labour, sometimes competent, sometimes not. While this idea had not prevented European immigrant labour arriving in France before the war, it had contributed to the absence of significant non-white immigration until the war made recourse to colonial labour essential. The other dominant idea about non-European, non-white workers was that their morality and standards of behaviour were dramatically different to the French, and that the workers were not to be trusted not to terrorise the women and children left defenceless by the departure of men to the front.

It was very difficult for any of these ideas to be challenged by the immigrant labour that was brought into France for the duration of the war, as the ideas were so deeply entrenched. Not only did this make these ideas particularly resilient but they also informed the ways in which foreign labour was hired and utilised. Employers proved unwilling to hire foreign, and particularly non-white, labour unless they were given guarantees that they would be working under tight control and surveillance, so the workers were given little chance to demonstrate they could work in any other

⁸⁷¹ Stovall, “The Color Line Behind The Lines”, p. 749.

⁸⁷² Revue de l’ *Alliance National pour l’Accroissement de la Population Française* 134 (1923) quoted

conditions. This was particularly true for black Africans, who were considered to be warriors, not workers. As Michel argues

l'expérience des soldats-travailleurs noirs fut passagère et d'ailleurs limitée. C'était là en partie une des conséquences des stéréotypes qui voulaient les Noirs à la guerre tandis que les Indochinois étaient jugés plus aptes aux travaux d'usine.⁸⁷³

The primary complaints about foreign labour were that it was allowing French men to be sent to the front, that they brought down wages, and that they corrupted French women. These factors interlinked with widely held racial stereotypes. Tyler Stovall argues that the French distinguished sharply between white and non-white foreigners - race was as much the issue as nationality.⁸⁷⁴ Colonial workers, North Africans, Annamites and particularly the Chinese were criticised for their *lenteur*, their physical weakness and sometimes insubordination or dishonesty. After the war, the government set up an order of priority for recruitment: Italians, Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, Portuguese, Spanish, Greeks, Russians, Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Bulgarians.⁸⁷⁵ These categories correlate closely individual worth with the war time roles of their states of origin. Italy and Portugal had been allies; Czechoslovakia had demonstrated its preference for the Allied nations against their Austro-Hungarian rulers. Spain and Greece had been neutral, the Russians had been traitorous. At the bottom of the pile were France's foes, though they were evidently still preferable to non-European labour.

While European workers were not always considered satisfactory, and were certainly not believed to be as good as French workers, they were still generally considered preferable to non-European immigrants. When mobilisation came, it forced the closure of the mines of Saint-Pierre-Montlimart. This left a number of unemployed foreigners, whom the mayor wished to repatriate. He decided that the non-white foreigners should be compelled to leave en-bloc. "J'ai pu décider tous les Marocains à quitter le pays [...] Il ne reste plus que des Italiens et des grecs."⁸⁷⁶ It is interesting to

in Camiscioli, "Producing Citizens, Reproducing the 'French Race'" p. 602.

873 Michel, *L'Appel à L'Afrique*, p. 374.

874 Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines", p. 740.

875 Schor, *L'Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 82.

876 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 39.

note that the decision was based purely on national origin rather than whichever individuals had proved to be good workers. In the Deux-Sevres it was noted, in February 1916, that the war had prevented Belgium, Poland and Italy from providing their usual flow of workers to the department, “Les rares envois de Kabyles et Espagnols, à notre connaissance, n’ont pas donné satisfaction et ne sauraient être employés que par équipes dans les grandes fermes. Les réfugiés belges, non plus, n’ont pas donné toute la satisfaction désirée.”⁸⁷⁷ In this case the report is able to make a distinction between the Belgian migrant labour which was usually acceptable, and the work of Belgian refugees, which wasn’t. When Rosny criticised Spanish artisans for their poor performance in the metalworking industry compared to their French co-workers, he put it down to their coming from areas with little industrial development.⁸⁷⁸ When non-white workers failed to meet expectations there was a tendency to attribute it to their innate shortcomings.

The Congrès de l’Association Nationale d’Expansion économique was made up of a variety of large businesses and can be considered representative of their views. In its journal of June 1917, there was a report on foreign workers in France. It advocated greater control on foreigners entering the country so that undesirables should be weeded out. This increased control would be sufficient to regulate Italians, Belgians and Spaniards crossing the border, but for those recruited from overseas “caractérisé par des habitudes sociales très différentes” there was a need for greater security. It was necessary for them to have a contract with an employer before they would be allowed to work in France.⁸⁷⁹

The report described succinctly the position of the French business class, reluctant to hire overseas labour, but compelled to do so, at least in the short term due to labour shortages.

Nous nous trouvons en présence de deux préoccupations presque contraires: nous savions qu’il était indispensable, qu’il serait indispensable, après la guerre, de faire appel, dans une certaine mesure impossible à déterminer, à la main-d’œuvre étrangère; nous étions évidemment décidés à empêcher le

⁸⁷⁷ AN F/12/8004, February, 1916.

⁸⁷⁸ *La Dépêche*, 16 September, 1917.

⁸⁷⁹ AN F/12/8001, June, 1917.

plus possible cet appel en employant les machines, comme le disait tout à l'heure M. le Président, en substituant le travail mécanique au travail à la main, mais nous savions que, malgré tous ces efforts, il serait indispensable de faire appel à la main-d'œuvre étrangère.

The article admitted that the use of foreign labour could present a national danger and argued that it must be done in such a way as not to jeopardise the interests of the bosses or the workers.⁸⁸⁰

Statistics

The aggregate number of immigrant workers employed in France during the war suggests near-parity between European and non-European labour. 330,000 workers came from Europe, primarily Spain, along with 300,000 from the rest of the world.⁸⁸¹ According to official records this was broken down into 78,556 Algerians; 48,995 Indochinese; 36,941 Chinese; 35,506 Moroccans; 18,249 Tunisians; 4,546 Malagasy. This totals 222,793, the rest were employed by the French army, already present in France, or migrated on their own.⁸⁸²

As Horne's figures show in Table 1, the use of European labour instead of non-European labour which had been the norm before the war happened again after the war when sufficient European labour became available. The only progress made by non-white labour was an increase in the percentage of North African workers from 1 to 5 percent.⁸⁸³ This was in spite of the fact that the immediate aftermath of the war saw large scale repatriation of Algerians, often in very poor conditions.⁸⁸⁴ According to the 1921 census, there were 13,000 Chinese; 6,500 Algerians; 4,000 Moroccans; 1,500 Tunisians; 175 Indochinese and 37 Madagascans in France; just over 25,000 in total, down from around 300,000 during the war.⁸⁸⁵

880 AN F/12/8001, June, 1917.

881 Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines" p. 741.

882 Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines", pp. 741-2.

883 Horne, "Immigrant Workers in France" p. 60.

884 Massard-Guilbaud, *Des Algériens à Lyon*, p. 50.

885 Tyler Stovall, "National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers: Whiteness and the Exclusion of Colonial Labor After World War I" in *Representations* 84 (2004) p. 58. Stovall suggests that though the post-war expulsion of colonial and Chinese labour may have returned France to a situation that resembled 1914, the very act of expulsion established racial whiteness as a key component of French national identity. Stovall, "National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers" p. 66.

Table 1Nationality of Foreign Workers in France, 1911-1926⁸⁸⁶

| Nation | 1911 (%) | 1914-1918 (%) | 1926 (%) |
|---------------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Italians | 38 | 3 | 32 |
| Belgians | 25 | 5 | 14 |
| Spanish | 9 | 35 | 13 |
| N. Africans | 1 | 20 | 5 |
| Germans/Austro-Hungarians | 11 | 15 # | 4 |
| Indochinese | - | 7 | - |
| Chinese | - | 6 | - |
| Greek | - | 4 | - |
| Portuguese | - | 3 | 2 |
| Polish | ?* | ? | 13 |
| Others | 16 | 2 | 17 |

The extent to which women increased their share of paid employment also should not be overstated. The total number of women employed in commerce and industry did not return to pre-war levels until 1916 and women never constituted more than 20% of those working in commerce and industry. At its peak at the end of 1917, levels of total female employment were 20% above the pre-war mark (40% of the total employed population as opposed to 32%).⁸⁸⁷ However, there was no lasting increase in the number of women working. In fact the reverse was true; 1946 proving to be the only year between 1921 and 1968 when the percentage of women in the workforce did not fall.⁸⁸⁸ Women were also still paid substantially less for equal work, though the gap did close during the war.⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸⁶ Horne, "Immigrant Workers in France" p. 60, *Poland wasn't an independent nation until after 1918, but Horne estimates that immigration to France had already begun before the war. # As Prisoners of War.

⁸⁸⁷ Thébaud, "The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division" p.30, Bard, Thébaud, "Les effets antiféministe de la Grande Guerre" p. 150.

⁸⁸⁸ Thébaud, "The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division" p. 70, Jean-Louis Robert "Women and Work in France during the First World War," in Richard Wall and Jay Winter (eds.) *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1988) p. 263.

⁸⁸⁹ Dubesset et al. "The Female Munition Workers of the Seine", p. 191.

Some qualification can be added to these figures by examining the work of Steven Hause and Anne-Marie Sohn. Sohn argues that women working in factories increased from 1 million in 1906 to 1.22m in 1921 and up to 1.47m in 1926.⁸⁹⁰ She criticises historians who claim that female labour declined after the war, asserting that the “disparity between the historian’s characterization (and even their use of statistics) and the reality is striking.” Hause’s figures for women in the workforce are expressed in Tables 2 and 3.⁸⁹¹

Table 2

Female participation in the French Workforce, 1906-1926

| Year | French Workforce | | | Agricultural Workforce | | | Industrial Workforce | | |
|------|------------------|------------------|------------|------------------------|------------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|------------|
| | Total (millions) | Women (millions) | % of Total | Men (millions) | Women (millions) | % of Total | Men (millions) | Women (millions) | % of Total |
| 1906 | 20.7 | 7.7 | 37.2 | 5.5 | 3.3 | 37.5 | 4.0 | 2.1 | 34.4 |
| 1911 | 20.9 | 7.7 | 36.8 | 5.4 | 3.2 | 37.2 | | | |
| 1921 | 21.7 | 8.6 | 39.6 | 5.0 | 4.0 | 44.4 | 4.3 | 2.0 | 31.7 |
| 1926 | 21.4 | 7.8 | 36.4 | 4.7 | 3.4 | 42.0 | 5.0 | 2.0 | 28.6 |

Table 3

Female participation in the French Workforce by percentage, 1906-1926

| Year | % of Total Workforce | % of Agricultural Workforce | % of Industrial Workforce |
|------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1906 | 34.4 | 42.9 | 27.3 |
| 1911 | | 41.6 | |
| 1921 | 31.7 | 46.5 | 23.3 |
| 1926 | 28.6 | 43.6 | 28.6 |

These figures show a leap in both the female participation in the workforce as a whole and in agriculture in particular between 1911 and 1921, both of which dropped back by 1926. Women’s participation in industry was fairly static in absolute terms, but

⁸⁹⁰ Sohn, “Between the Wars in France and England” p. 97.

⁸⁹¹ Hause, Kenney, *Women’s Suffrage and Social Politics* p. 106.

dropped steadily in percentage terms. By 1926 women constituted 28.6% of industrial workers, compared to 34.4% in 1906.⁸⁹²

Jean-Louis Robert argues that “Within two years of the Armistice, the return of enlisted men to work brought the proportion of women among the factory back to roughly the 1914 level.”⁸⁹³ The absolute figures are misleading though, as they imply that this was the case in all branches of industry. In reality there were marked diversities, an examination of which suggests that the war was less of a turning point.

According to Clemenceau’s secretary, only half a million women entered the industrial work force during the war. As women working in munitions factories increased from 15,000 in 1915 to 684,000 in 1917, it can be seen that this represented a major redistribution of female employment, rather than a wholesale influx of women into the industrial workplace.⁸⁹⁴ Indeed, F. Mathieu, a member of the Toulouse chamber of commerce, gave a report on the *main d’œuvre féminine* in which he complained that the high wages offered in the munitions plant in Toulouse were leading women to abandon jobs elsewhere in industry “nous pouvons être assurés que la main d’œuvre féminine, déjà très rare, va faire totalement défaut à l’industrie, dans un temps très rapproché.” The chamber unanimously accepted his report.⁸⁹⁵

La Bataille took the line that the war had just opened the eyes of the middle classes to working women, something that was nothing new for the working class. A cartoon addressed “A ceux qui faisaient les romans mondains” featured a working woman telling a writer “Tiens! vous délaissez les mondaines et alors vous découvrez qu’il y a d’autres femmes intéressantes: les ouvrières.”⁸⁹⁶ For *La Bataille* what was new was the increased possibility of abuse of the female workforce.

892 Hause, Kenney, *Women’s Suffrage and Social Politics* pp. 198-199.

893 Robert “Women and Work in France during the First World War,” p. 256.

894 Hause, Kenney, *Women’s Suffrage and Social Politics* p. 199.

895 AN F/12/8004, undated, probably 1916.

896 *La Bataille*, 3 July, 1916.

La femme au magasin, au bureau, à l'atelier, ça n'est pas la chose nouvelle. Ce qui est nouveau, ce sont les conditions dans lesquelles l'afflux s'est fait de la main d'œuvre féminine. Cet afflux a donné lieu à de nombreux et criants abus qu'il convient de réfréner, de supprimer.⁸⁹⁷

The absolute decline in women working in industry was primarily brought about by the decline of the “conventional” 19th century female worker in the textile and clothing trades, which was accelerated by the conflict. Instead women were moving into the commercial services sector, a trend which began before the war and continued through it, and afterwards. For instance in banking and insurance in 1906 only 5.5% of the employees were female, rising to 28% in 1921 and then 31% ten years later.⁸⁹⁸

The Limits of Change

That the movement of women into the male world of manufacturing was only seen as a temporary expedient was made clear by the minister, Louis Loucheur, who on 13 November 1918 congratulated “women working in factories and state-operated facilities for National Defence”. He told them:

In response to an appeal from the French Republic, you forsook your traditional pursuits in order to manufacture armaments for the war effort. The victory to which you have contributed so much is now assured; there is no more need to manufacture explosives. [...] Now you can best serve the country by returning to your former pursuits, busying yourself with peacetime activities.⁸⁹⁹

Employers heeded his words. Between the 1st of November and the 31st of December 1918, Rennes arsenal laid off 4556 people, of whom 96% were women.⁹⁰⁰ A syndicalist response was made by Bedel, who sought only for women to be retained in employment over the winter.

D'après lui, le Ministre et le Directeur de la Poudrerie n'invitent nullement les ouvrières à quitter cet établissement, ils les exhortent simplement à chercher du travail d'un autre côté et seules doivent partir, à son avis, celles qui ont atteint ce résultat. [...] Tout doit donc être mis en oeuvre pour procurer du

⁸⁹⁷ *La Bataille*, 12 February, 1917.

⁸⁹⁸ Robert “Women and Work in France during the First World War,” p. 264.

⁸⁹⁹ Dubesset et al. “The Female Munition Workers of the Seine”, pp. 207-8.

⁹⁰⁰ Mougnet, “14-18, Quelles traces de pacifisme dans l'Ille-et-Vilaine en guerre.” p. 186.

travail à toutes les ouvrières. [...] Il a demandé ... le maintien des ouvrières, à leur divers emplois, jusqu'à la fin Avril, c'est à dire jusqu'à la fin de la mauvaise saison.⁹⁰¹

Moreover, it was clear from Loucheur's appeal that his remarks had a broader application than simply the munitions industry. Firstly because the statement was aimed solely at women, and not at the male workforce for whom there was presumably no more need to manufacture explosives either; and more significantly because it called for them to return to their traditional pursuits. It was not envisaged that they would apply their newly acquired skills anywhere else in the French manufacturing industry. The comment even denied women the agency involved in making their own decision to manufacture arms; they had only acted in response to an appeal from the Republic.

Indeed the use of women as an stopgap workforce itself represented a continuity of conventional employment practice, before, during and after the war. Women's work was nearly always seen as a makeshift substitute for male labour, and women were usually the first to be fired in any change of economic circumstances.

Of course Loucheur had acknowledged the female contribution to the war effort, and many other men echoed him. The deputy Magniez declared in 1918

La guerre a mis en pleine lumière l'immense valeur de la coopération féminine à la vie nationale! (...) Les femmes se sont presque toutes mobilisées aux champs, dans les usines, dans les ambulances, dans les administrations! Elles ont prouvé qu'elles pouvaient être, dans presque tous les domaines nos précieuses collaboratrices; ne les traitons pas en esclaves!⁹⁰²

Paul Smith notes that a number of prominent feminists were appointed to key official bodies in the wake of war,⁹⁰³ while Jo Burr Margadant has argued that the war saw a sizeable improvement in the status of *institutrices*

901 AN F/7/12986/1, 24 November, 1918.

902 Albistur, Armogathe, *Histoire du féminisme français*, p. 381.

903 Smith, *Feminism and the Third Republic*, p. 13.

Not only did women work in organizations with departmental and national affiliations; they assumed a role as leaders in a national endeavor. In so doing, they gained a qualitatively new and different public image in their own communities that placed them in the ranks of the notables.⁹⁰⁴

Given this development, it is important to stress that women were not held to have shown themselves the equal of men as workers. To the men in power during and after the war, women had proven themselves no more than an adequate stopgap in most areas of employment. In a minority of jobs they were perceived as having qualities that made them better employees than men, but these qualities were easily adapted into the prevailing image of the woman worker. For this reason the war proved to have little impact on female status in the workplace. What changes did result in the pattern of female employment were primarily due to structural changes in the economy, rather than male attitudes to women's work.

This may seem surprising given the perception that female working practices had been completely transformed during the war. Yet this transformation can be exaggerated. A huge number of women still worked in traditional areas such as nursing or charity.⁹⁰⁵ Even the munitionettes, that hugely popular image, were in a minority at work. In the arsenal at Rennes in June 1917, nearly two thirds of the workforce was male.⁹⁰⁶ In establishments working towards weapons production in Lyon in 1917, there were 192 factories employing 70716 workers. Of these 54931 (77.68%) were men and only 15785 were women. 48 factories employed no women at all, and in only 23 were women in a majority.⁹⁰⁷ Of the 1,580,000 people employed in the French defence industries nationwide, only 362,879 were women – less than a quarter.⁹⁰⁸ In 1916, it was noted that in Central administration “où les conditions de travail sont essentiellement favorables à la main-d'oeuvre féminine,” that they only formed a third of the work force. It was felt that this proportion should rise to at least half.⁹⁰⁹ Furthermore, women were not working alongside men as equals; instead the work could be rigorously segregated. As Downs argues

904 Margadant, *Madame le Professeur*, p. 238.

905 Thébaud, *La femme au temps de la guerre*, pp. 83-125.

906 Mougenet, “14-18, Quelles traces de pacifisme dans l’Ille-et-Vilaine en guerre.” p. 172.

907 AN F/7/13365, 7 June, 1917.

908 Marc Ferro, *The Great War, 1914-1918*. New York: Military Heritage Press (1989) p. 170.

909 AN F/12/7999, 17 October, 1916.

Employers therefore tried to separate women from men wherever possible, and women sometimes worked in shops, or areas within a shop, where all the production workers were female. The only men to be seen were those who set and regulated the machinery, and of course, the foremen and shop chiefs. In such cases, the “natural” rule of male over female underwrote the authority structure on the factory floor,⁹¹⁰

In response to a number of thefts in the Poudrerie at Toulouse, attributed to female workers, it was decided to appoint some female supervisors to watch over property. But, so as not to undermine the authority of the bosses, these women were not allowed to take action themselves, they merely reported to their superiors.⁹¹¹

Similarly, colonial labourers in France had their lives closely regulated by the Colonial Labor Organization Service, which assigned employers, housing, transportation, and food in an attempt to replicate the structures of colonial labour on French soil. In May 1918, colonial workers were put under military discipline.⁹¹²

Often the government’s desire to free French men to go to the front by employing women or foreigners was hindered by considerable reluctance amongst employers to hire them. In some industries women were offered work without much hesitation, but in the munitions industry where the antagonism towards them shown by industrialists meant they were used as a last resort, the state was forced to intervene to encourage female work in munitions plants.⁹¹³ A report in May 1916 on attempts to replace men with women in war factories noted that significant progress had been made, and though certain companies in Bordeaux and Toulouse had claimed “Il n’y a jamais eu de femmes, donc on ne peut pas en employer”, these objections were overcome eventually.⁹¹⁴ An under secretary in the war ministry, René Besnard in January 1917 gave an instruction on the replacement of secretaries and orderlies eligible for military service, with women. He directed that this should happen everywhere, with the only exceptions being

910 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, p. 57.

911 AN F/7/12986/1, 5 June, 1917.

912 Stovall, “The Color Line Behind The Lines”, p. 744, Horne, “Immigrant Workers in France” p. 76.

913 Thébaud, “The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division”, p. 30.

914 *La Petite Gironde*, 5 May, 1916.

secrétaires réellement irremplaçable en raison de leurs connaissances techniques ou professionnelles que généralement les femmes ne possèdent pas, et non a des secrétaires dont le départ n'aurait d'autre conséquence que d'apporter une certaine gêne dans le service.

He concluded

Les militaires employés à l'Administration Centrale seront les premiers à comprendre qu'ils doivent être utilisés suivant leurs aptitudes et leur état physique dans les seuls emplois qui ne peuvent être confiés à des femmes.⁹¹⁵

In general, the first preoccupation of almost everyone concerned with the workforce was the possibility of utilising underemployed soldiers, or permissionnaires. While the committee in the Rennes region was typical in requesting soldiers and prisoners of war throughout, the Toulouse suggested soldiers, foreigners (notably Spanish) and then prisoners. In March 1916, the Ministry of War's delegate on the economic action committee of the Limoges region noted that "Le Directeur de la Mayenne me dit que sur une demande de 2000 hommes faite a l'autorité militaire lundi dernier il n'a pu en obtenir que 70. Dans la Sarthe c'est la même situation."⁹¹⁶ Thus again the two preferred options for extra labour were the army, and prisoners of war.

The way in which the use of colonial labour was envisaged differed greatly from that of French workers. Because colonial labourers were not trusted to work without supervision or to integrate into local communities; it was felt to be necessary to employ them in large teams under direct supervision rather than allocating them to individual farms. For example, it was argued that Algerians had more problems working in factories in the big cities, compared to departments such as the Aveyron, Hautes-Alpes, and Basse-Alpes where there were large numbers of homogenous Algerian communities and less industrialisation.⁹¹⁷ The need for large teams was considered by the Comité consultatif d'action économique in the Rennes region as a reason for doubting the efficacy of hiring colonial labour.

915 AN F/12/7999, January, 1917.

916 AN F/12/8004, March, 1916.

917 Meynier, *L'Algérie Révélée*, p. 474.

La propriété y est très morcelée et les hommes seraient souvent employés par unité ou par petits groupes de 2 ou 3 dans les fermes. Dans ces conditions, la différence de mœurs et de langage risque de constituer un gros obstacle.

It would be necessary to create in each commune, or group of communes a barracks to house the workers, despatching them daily to the farms. The reference to differences in “mœurs” indicates the fears the committee had over the threat that colonial workers presented to the domestic population, particularly the women. During the committees discussions this was made explicit, and it was claimed that “dans beaucoup d’endroits, les femmes sont restées seules et n’accepteront pas volontiers la présence chez elles de travailleurs étrangers.” It was noted that Kabyle workers had been used successfully in the Eure and Loiret, but that was felt to be due to large farms employing large teams.⁹¹⁸

M. d’Orlye, the Directeur intérimaire des services agricole for the Haute Savoie had similar concerns for his region

Nous avons établi par l’expérience de 1915 que l’équipe travaillant s’ensemble ne donne pas un travail pratique dans nos propriétés très morcelées, de superficies restreintes, il a été reconnu qu’elle rendait plus de services par travail d’une, deux ou trois unités réparties à tour de rôle aux exploitations. Le soldat dont la qualité donne toute sécurité peut vivre quelques jours à la vie de famille privée de son chef. En sera-t-il de même de l’ouvrier kabyle étranger à nos mœurs, à nos usages?

The sub-committee responded that it understood the difficulties, but nevertheless wanted the director to continue his investigations on the subject.⁹¹⁹ His views seemed to be in tune with the rest of the department, the impression given in surveys on the possibility of employing foreign workers was that they were strongly adverse to employing either colonial or foreign workers.⁹²⁰ The phrases used by d’Orlye also reveal what was often hidden under euphemisms such as differences in mores or customs. In the scenario envisaged by d’Orlye, Kabyle workers couldn’t be trusted

918 AN F/12/8004, 8 February, 1916.

919 AN F/12/8004, 24 February, 1916.

920 AN F/12/8004, 10 February, 1916.

not to take advantage of a household deprived of the head of the family, by sexually abusing the female(s) of the house.

These concerns were replicated in Anjou, where the prefect wrote in 1916 that it would be “impossible d’obtenir des femmes demeurées seules dans leurs fermes qu’elles consentent à introduire chez elle des Annamites ou des Kabyles”. The Conseil général tried again in April 1917 but “l’enquête effectuée auprès des maires a abouti à un refus unanime”. Some colonial labour was finally accepted in the summer of 1918, but it was kept away from the Angevin population.⁹²¹

There was considerable regional variation between departments as to whether immigrant labour was desirable. An analysis of the Besançon region’s workforce on the subject of colonial and foreign labour noted: “Les populations de nos régions très particularistes semblent éprouver quelque méfiance à l’égard de ces étrangers, ignorant les services qu’ils pourront rendre et redoutant les déboires qu’ils ont éprouvés du côté des réfugiés et des évacués de la Belgique et du Nord de la France.”⁹²² The sub-committee of the Corrèze noted tersely that foreign workers were hardly used in the department and rarely asked for. Two weeks later, the committee argued “Sans exclure la main d’œuvre étrangère ou coloniale dont l’appoint peut être appréciable dans certaines régions, il serait risqué de trop compter sur celle à la suite des mécomptes de l’an dernier.”⁹²³ If the authorities in the Corrèze rejected foreign labour, the committee in the Maine-et-Loire didn’t even consider the possibility, reporting in February 1916 on the lack of male workers “... il n’y a aucun remède général à cet état de chose, si ce n’est d’employer autant que possible la main d’œuvre féminine, car les hommes doivent rester à l’armée jusqu’au bout.”⁹²⁴ Around the same time, the *Petite Gironde* examined the problems of shortages in the agricultural workforce. They concluded that soldiers on leave and prisoners of war were not sufficient, and that what was needed was mutual assistance.⁹²⁵ Two weeks later, the author followed up with another article responding to numerous suggestions by his

921 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, pp. 201-202.

922 AN F/12/8004, undated, probably from early 1916.

923 AN F/12/8004, Corrèze sub-committee of economic action report, 13 January, 1916, 27 January, 1916.

924 AN F/12/8008, February, 1916.

925 *La Petite Gironde*, 16 January, 1916.

readership, once again foreign labour was not mentioned. When one of his colleagues also addressed the issue a few days later, labour was ignored in favour of advocacy of greatly increased investment in agricultural machinery.⁹²⁶ M. Martin presented a report to the Committee for Economic Action for the Marseille region on the industrial and commercial situation. Following a discussion, the committee made resolutions calling for “la répartition du blé entre les minoteries, la livraison de charbons aux usines a gaz, l’enseignement technique des mutilés, l’interdiction de sortie des fourrages. Il a demandé que les pommes de terre ne soient pas taxées.”⁹²⁷ Once again, issues relating to the employment of women and foreigners were not at the top of the agenda.

By contrast, the Comité Consultatif d’action économique of the Limoges region noted that “l’importation de la main d’œuvre espagnole soit favorisée en Dordogne” while in the Toulouse region, a report on foreign labour showed some enthusiasm for immigrant labour. M. Ducasse asserted that the Spanish main d’œuvre had been unfairly denigrated, and that Spanish employees in the Midi, were excellent workers, if carefully chosen. M. Couzinet agreed, recalling that at the start of the war farmers in the Aude and the Hérault had demanded the immediate return of Spanish workers that the authorities had repatriated. M. Labie believed that France was becoming a country of immigration, and thus it was necessary to replicate the immigration controls of Argentina and Brazil to assure that immigrants are fit and healthy. No one spoke against immigrant labour, on the assumption that it came from Spain.⁹²⁸ Couzinet did also seek other avenues of immigrant labour. In February 1916, he wrote to the Ministry of war, in response to a query on foreign labour. He repeated his compliments for Spanish workers, but also stated that he wished to recruit some Kabyle workers, and was frustrated by being prevented from doing so by a government interdiction against Kabyles leaving Africa.⁹²⁹

926 *La Petite Gironde*, 28 January, 1916; 1 February, 1916.

927 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 22 March, 1917.

928 AN F/12/8004, Committee of economic action report, 12th Region, 18 January, 1916. AN F/12/8004, 24 January, 1916.

929 AN F/12/8004, February, 1916.

If the employers in Toulouse were generally positive about immigrant labour, the local newspaper did not necessarily share their position. In *La Dépêche*, Rosny argued that there was a certain amount of animosity to foreigners amongst French workers and that “[l]es Kabyles sont le plus souvent méprisés”. He suggested that they could be well employed however, if only in work that no Frenchmen wanted to do. “[I]ls peuvent rendre de sérieux services dans les rudes besognes de forge, de chaufferie, de déchargements d’ordures, *dans tout ce que les autres ne veulent pas faire.*”⁹³⁰ Immigrant labour from Asia was also hampered by the negative opinion held by the French towards them. Rosny did argue that “Asiatiques” were adroit, unassuming, and were quick to learn new jobs. Unfortunately, they were disliked by the local population, particularly by “the revolutionaries” who suspected them as potential agents of government subversion. Too often they were the subject of hostile comments. Due to this Rosny argued that they could only be effective if they were grouped together.⁹³¹

Rosny concluded that

Au, total, et bien entendu avec des très honorables exceptions, le travail étranger n’est pas convenablement employé et il est mal accueilli. J’ai entendu plus d’une fois des ouvriers dire ‘Qu’est-ce que ces gens viennent faire chez nous?’ Ou bien: ‘ils feraient mieux de rester chez eux!’

Rosny claimed regret at having to say these things, but felt he had to. He urged the French workers to accept the inevitability of having foreign workers helping out (with rigorous measures taken to ensure that no French worker lost his job to one, of course) in a time of need.⁹³²

By the start of the next year the local Comité Consultatif d’action économique had modified its thinking somewhat. A report in February 1917 advised that foreign workers only be able to stay while they had certificate giving proof of employment. The colonial workforce was dealt with in a separate section, which focused on how best to use it despite the flaws of those who constituted it.

930 *La Dépêche*, 16 September, 1917 (emphasis in the original).

931 *La Dépêche*, 16 September, 1917.

932 *La Dépêche*, 16 September, 1917.

The Indochinese were not able to offer much to rural work in the département, largely because they lacked experience at the types of agriculture used in the region, particularly given that they were working in teams of 20 or 30. It was suggested that the Indochinese could be used in the state factories or replace the *Réserve de l'armée territoriale*, who could then work in the fields, a suggestion that was repeated two months later.⁹³³

Often non-European workers were not even considered for employment. A discussion in the Chamber of Deputies, in March, 1916, saw Paul Laffont, from the Ariège, claim “On a essayé la main d'œuvre espagnole qui a donné des mécomptes et celle des réfugiés qui n'étaient pas préparés à cette besogne. La seule main d'œuvre utile est la main d'œuvre militaire qu'il faut mieux régler et accorder aux petit cultivateurs plus rapidement.” No-one disagreed.⁹³⁴ A report by Mathieu declared that it was impossible to get sufficient industrial labour from Spain, Italy or Switzerland, giving reasons why in each case. “Nous sommes donc obligés de nous suffire et de ne compter que sur nos seules ressources.”⁹³⁵ In 1916, a report from the Orne suggested just two remedies to the problem of diminishing food supplies: supplementing the insufficient workforce with members of the military, or else prisoners of war; or better utilisation of motorised transport to reduce the delays in transportation. To get more women working or to import foreign labour was not on their agenda.⁹³⁶

National/Regional division.

By contrast with the regional committees, at a national level there was a greater willingness to employ foreigners. The minutes of the meetings of the interministerial conference on the workforce reveal that they were consistently keen to find new ways to employ women and foreigners. The lengths to which they were prepared to go are indicated by one example, that in July 1917 they were investigating the possibility of hiring Italians who were currently unemployed in South America.⁹³⁷

933 AN F/12/8011, February, 1917 ; AN F/12/8011, 4 April, 1917.

934 *La Petite Gironde*, 22 March, 1916.

935 AN F/12/8004, Undated, probably from early 1916.

936 AN F/12/8004, Undated, probably from early 1916.

937 AN F/14/11334 Minutes from meeting of the Conférence Interministérielle de la Main d'Œuvre,

This is not to say that the members of this conference had a much higher opinion of the value of colonial labour. In a meeting in May 1917, M. Coste declared that the use of Algerians in the mines had not been encouraging. M. Weil also noted the lack of success of this workforce. Henry Berenger, the President of the committee responded that as the mining had to be done it was necessary to make every effort to accommodate them. Later in the discussion, the subject of Annamites working as nurses came up. It was stated that two Annamite nurses were needed to replace a French one. This prompted a similar response from a M. Sevin that given the impracticality of employing a French workforce, then local hospital employers had to make use of anyone available.⁹³⁸ The committee's attempts to bolster the workforce with foreigners was entirely down to a lack of a feasible alternative.

This willingness of the central authorities to make the best of the difficulties with colonial labour was not always shared by those who actually had to work with them. The conference noted that using North African in mines in 1915-1916 had not been satisfactory due to the unreliability and incompetence of the workers. They believed the problem could be resolved if only those who had worked in French mines before the war were hired, and the state housed them in order to avoid contact with the locals. These proposals were rebuffed by employers in the mines of the Pas-de-Calais, primarily because of their disquiet over the ructions that the employment of North Africans would cause amongst the local population. The regional miners union also declared its opposition, on moral and sanitary grounds, claiming that they feared for working families, missing the head of the household, living next to North Africans, and also they were worried about the "contamination possible de la population locale."⁹³⁹

In a report accepted by the committee of economic action in the Cher, M. Amichau detailed the objections of workers organisations to inconveniences resulting from the

28 July, 1917.

938 AN F/14/11334 Minutes from meeting of the Conference Interministerielle de la Main d'Œuvre, 12 May, 1917.

939 AN F/14/11334 Minutes from meeting of the Conference Interministerielle de la Main d'Œuvre, 7 July, 1917.

presence of exotic workers amongst them. “A l’atelier, au restaurant, en voyage, dans la rue, parfois dans la maison, nos enfants, nos femmes et nous-mêmes, seront en contact avec eux, quelles que soient les mesures prises.” In this description, simply being forced into contact with non-white workers was enough to arouse disgust. Amichau did note that the better off classes were more sheltered from this “promiscuité” and did often benefit from a supplemental workforce that could be exploited.⁹⁴⁰

In a discussion on foreign labour in the Nantes region, M. Brichaux, the Mayor of St-Nazaire complained that 2-300 Moroccans hired by a factory there had abruptly disappeared, but not before they had caused “grands ennuis dans la ville au point de vue de l’ordre publique.” Blanchard, manager of the Maison du Marin was also not in favour of hiring colonial workers, as they might be of dubious morality. Benoit, President of the Union des Syndicats and also presiding over the session summed up by saying that he couldn’t pretend to advocate the utilisation of the colonial workforce, but it was necessary to inform potential employees of the positives and negatives associated with them.⁹⁴¹

Sometimes colonial workers were requested. The Haute-Vienne sub-committee in 1917 asked for a contingent of Tunisian agricultural workers, considering that this “experiment” would provide an opportunity for other employers to learn how to manage this particular workforce. However, this request was rejected by the Ministry of Colonies and the question was postponed until 1918. A request in 1916 for Arab/Kabyle workers had also been rejected.⁹⁴²

Elsewhere however, the response was largely negative. In the Nantes region it was reported that the rural population wouldn’t easily accept foreign workers, including refugees. The prefect of the Tarn and Garonne claimed to have been informed that foreign workers wouldn’t be utilisable in his department.⁹⁴³ The committee in the

940 AN F/12/8004, Sub-committee of economic action report, department of Cher, 29 March, 1916.

941 AN F/12/8008, Minutes of meeting of the Committee of Economic Action for the 11th Region, 17 June, 1916.

942 AN F/12/8009/A, 25 January, 1918; 17 June, 1916.

943 AN F/12/8004, Committee of economic action report, 11th region, 16 February, 1916; 17th region, 22 February, 1916.

Cher decided not to call on a foreign workforce except as a last resort.⁹⁴⁴

A report from the Tours region in February 1916 detailed in Table 4 reveals the extent to which there was a reluctance to employ foreigners there, detailing the number of agricultural workers that it was believed were required, and the number of foreign or colonial workers that would be accepted.

Table 4

Requests for Foreign Agricultural Workers, 9th Economic Region, 1916.⁹⁴⁵

| Department | Agricultural Workers Required | Foreigners Requested |
|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Indre-et-Loire | 2,500 peak, 1,000 off-peak | 0 |
| Maine-et-Loire | 1,500, plus 400 extra in March | 0 |
| Vienne | 4,000 March to November | 300 Arabs |
| Indre | 5-600 | 0 |
| Deux-Sevres | 300 | 0 |

The same report also noted that commerce in the region was equally indisposed towards employing imported workers.

Even where these committees were more positive about employing foreigners, they did so with serious reservations. The consultative committee for the Montpellier region realised that a contribution could be made by foreign workers, but they thought it was essential that colonial workers be subject to a careful experimental study to determine what measures were required to safeguard the tranquility and customs of the community, their families and public health.⁹⁴⁶ Even a very positive report from the Orléans region about Kabyle labour in the Loiret, stating they had largely given satisfaction, that they were courageous, sober and very peacable qualified this in the next sentence by claiming they had a productivity of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the average worker.⁹⁴⁷

The regions near the borders did tend to be rather more accepting of immigrant

944 AN F/12/8004, Cher Sub-committee of economic action, 2 February, 1916.

945 AN F/12/8004, Committee of economic action report, 9th region, 12 February, 1916.

946 AN F/12/8004, 9 February, 1916.

workers, perhaps because they had a tradition of employing them. According to the interministerial conference on the workforce, the 8000 foreigners in the French mines were largely made up of Belgians in the North, Spanish around Toulouse and Italians in Marseille and Grenoble.⁹⁴⁸ This can be illustrated with this table of coal mining regions employing over 2000 employees, which shows that the border areas, and particularly the ones in the South, had a much higher proportion of foreigners working there. It's also interesting to note that women were classified together with the children.

Table 5

Foreign and Women workers in the French mines, 1917.⁹⁴⁹

| | Workers | Foreigners | % | Women/Children | % |
|------------------|---------|------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Calais | 14950 | 801 | 5.35 | 2482 | 16.60 |
| Boulogne | 45741 | 1153 | 2.52 | 8610 | 18.82 |
| Chalon sur Saone | 12985 | 169 | 1.30 | 1685 | 12.98 |
| Clermont | 9772 | 222 | 2.27 | 1106 | 11.31 |
| Grenoble | 2272 | 313 | 13.78 | 239 | 10.52 |
| Marseille | 2523 | 792 | 31.39 | 448 | 17.76 |
| St Etienne | 16354 | 1755 | 10.73 | 2075 | 12.69 |
| Toulouse | 13160 | 1852 | 14.07 | 2245 | 17.06 |

When discussing potential immigrants, those in the border regions naturally leaned towards those they had prewar experience of. So Morel, vice-president of the Lyon Chamber of Commerce, urged that, for the duration of France's period of dearth in workers, they should call upon the assistance of the Swiss and the Italians.⁹⁵⁰ Similarly, as noted earlier, in the Dordogne and Haute-Garonne they favoured Spanish immigrants.

Chinese workers in the maritime ports

Official documentation on the Chinese workers hired for the ports in North-Western France, illustrates the way in which foreign workers could be employed. It displays

947 AN F/12/8004, 26 February, 1916.

948 AN F/14/11334, 7 July, 1917.

949 AN F/14/11334, Undated, but probably from early 1917.

950 Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *L'Après-Guerre*, p. 12.

the deep shortages of manpower that were afflicting the ports, and the willingness of the central authorities to remedy that through use of non-European workers, often despite considerable resistance from local authorities, employers and workers.

The state sought to ensure that they were not mistreated either by their employers or by French workers by requiring employers to meet certain conditions. One of these was “They must be treated with benevolence, and care must be taken that they are not subject to any bullying from the other workers.” The government also sought to ensure that Chinese workers were given the same holidays as French workers, and were not made to work proportionately more night shifts.⁹⁵¹

When Nantes was requesting Chinese workers for its port, Chargueraud, the Chef du Service Central d’Exploitation des Ports Maritimes wrote them a letter describing the conditions for employing “exotique” labourers. He concluded “J’attache la plus grande importance à faire assurer l’emploi de ces travailleurs exotiques dans de bonnes conditions en raison de développement qu’est appelée à prendre l’utilisation de cette main d’œuvre dans les ports.”⁹⁵² A month later, Chargueraud again urged employers to show good will towards the Chinese in case a post-war manpower crisis required the conservation of them for a while after the peace.⁹⁵³

Given the exotic nature of the Chinese contingents, the government also found it necessary to offer instructions to employers on how best to utilise the Chinese workers. It sought to encourage employers as to the varied qualities of the Northern Chinese, describing them as supple, intelligent, patient, meticulous, adroit and hardy. It was also argued that they could adapt comfortably to the French climate, a frequent doubt raised about non-European workers. The instructions also offered a variety of warnings as to potential problems. They declared that the Chinese had a lot of pride and self-esteem, and thus employers were advised not to humiliate them in front of their comrades. They also argued that Asiatics in general, and the Chinese in particular, were not believed to have the French sense of exactitude. Furthermore, the Chinese had to be segregated from the Indochinese due to “well-known” antipathy

951 AN F/14/11331 15 September, 1916.

952 AN F/14/11331 17 August, 1917.

between their races.⁹⁵⁴ Later on, the authorities were forced to instruct the ports to keep Northern and Southern Chinese apart in order to avoid incidents which, it was argued were common between those of different origins.⁹⁵⁵

Initially there was great demand for Chinese labour because of undermanning in the dockyards. At the same time as Saint-Nazaire requested its first contingent of Chinese workers, Nantes was seeking to increase the number of Chinese working there, by another 50.⁹⁵⁶ At Cherbourg in December 1917 non-specialised civil workers were non-existent, and prisoners of war were insufficient, so an offer of Chinese workers was accepted enthusiastically. The central authorities believed Cherbourg was a propitious location for the Chinese as the absence of civil dockers would avoid conflict.⁹⁵⁷

As the reference to the potential conflict with civil dockers implies, this welcome was not always unqualified. While in the Charente-Inférieure new workers were welcomed by Meunier, the Chief Engineer, he expressed some caution on behalf of employers as to how the proposed Chinese/Siamese workforce should be employed. He claimed that “the entrepreneurs, after the unfortunate experiences that they had in 1915 with the Kabyles, refuse to take charge of individual workers. They demand that they are utilised like prisoners of war.”⁹⁵⁸

The request for additional workers in Nantes suggested that it had, initially at least managed the successful employment of the Chinese, but this was not replicated in Saint-Nazaire though and in February 1918 the engineer in charge of the maritime ports, de Joly, sent a request that the Chinese workers there be transferred to Nantes. The immediate reason for de Joly’s request was that the Chinese were refusing to unload coal, on the grounds that they had been engaged as unskilled labour not as

953 AN F/14/11331, 14 October, 1917.

954 AN F/14/11331, 26 September, 1916.

955 AN F/14/11331, 11 August, 1917, The need to avoid putting Northern and Southern Chinese workers in the same establishment was also noted in the Minutes from meeting of the Conference Interministerielle de la Main d’Œuvre, 13 January, 1917.

956 AN F/14/11331 15 December, 1917.

957 AN F/14/11331, 19 December, 1917; 31 December, 1917

958 AN F/14/11331 4 September, 1917.

dockers.⁹⁵⁹ A letter from the Association des Employeurs de Main d'Œuvre du Port de Saint-Nazaire had stated that in their opinion the Chinese workers did not have sufficient experience to work unloading ships and particularly not in the unloading of coal.⁹⁶⁰ Despite their ineffectiveness at working with coal, the authorities at Saint-Nazaire did note some positive attributes amongst the Chinese, "ils portent par exemple avec adresse des mannes sur la tête et par un système de va et vient judicieux arrivent, grâce à leur célérité dans les mouvements et à leur rapidité d'allure, à faire du bon travail de portage."

Nevertheless, employers regularly complained about the cost of the Chinese relative to their productivity, and the Saint-Nazaire port authorities wanted all Chinese workers to leave the port.⁹⁶¹ Their argument was summed up by de Joly, who claimed that despite every attempt to utilise them, they had never managed anything more than insignificant output as well as an overt unwillingness to work with coal. De Joly suggested that they would be better employed at Nantes, where the greater range of work meant that the Chinese could be utilised in tasks more suited to their aptitudes. He also said that it was essential to reinforce "le cadre blanc" in Nantes with two supervisors and a (male) nurse. While de Joly didn't specify why these reinforcements were necessary, it can be speculated that it may have been to counter an unwillingness to work amongst the Chinese.⁹⁶²

Kauffman, the Chef d'Exploitation at the Nantes port was asked if they wanted the return of the Chinese workers from St-Nazaire. He noted that the authorities in Nantes shared some of the views expressed in St-Nazaire. "La répulsion naturelle des chinois pour tout ce qui est manutention mécanique a été reconnue à Nantes comme à Saint-Nazaire." Nevertheless, Kauffman wasn't opposed to their return as it would mean he could dispense with the services of Moroccan workers who had been utterly unsatisfactory and so de Joly's request was carried out.⁹⁶³

959 AN F/14/11331 20 January, 1918.

960 AN F/14/11331 29 January, 1918.

961 AN F/14/11331, 1 February, 1918.

962 AN F/14/11331 15 February, 1918.

963 AN F/14/11331, 7 February, 1918.

6 months later, Kauffman was bemoaning the performance of the Chinese in Nantes, pointing out although the authorities tried to keep them in employment by giving them priority, they couldn't persuade employers to hire them for certain tasks – working with coal, steel or heavy loads. Kauffman sought to dismiss 10% of the workforce as totally useless.⁹⁶⁴

These complaints display several common criticisms of foreign workers: that they often lacked motivation; that they were unable to undertake certain tasks; they required white supervision to work effectively and that these faults derived from their race. This last point was considered crucial when camps were being designed to house prospective Chinese workers in 1917 where it was argued that their location must be chosen in a way that makes surveillance easy. In particular, they needed to be kept apart from the prisoner of war camps, in order to avoid any communication between the Germans and the Chinese.⁹⁶⁵

This was not to prevent the captured enemy being a bad influence, but the reverse, as the boss of Génie, M. Cadier, made clear in a letter of complaint to the authorities. Cadier's letter also made similar criticisms to those of de Joly about the poor production achieved by the Chinese, as well as the need for surveillance and discipline to combat their laziness.

Vous avez mis 60 chinois à la disposition pour les travaux de terrassement du Camp des Travailleurs de l'ouvrage des Fédérés.

Ces chinois montrent une paresse excessive au travail et comme il est impossible aux Surveillants du Génie de se faire comprendre, et que ce surveillant n'a d'autre part aucune action disciplinaire sur ces travailleurs, il en résulte que le rendement fourni est dérisoire.

Je viens vous demander, en conséquence, de bien vouloir mettre à ma disposition, si possible, un surveillant interprète ayant un pouvoir disciplinaire effectif sur les chinois.

Faute de ce surveillant, je serais obligé de ne plus utiliser les travailleurs chinois, étant donné le très faible rendement de leur travail et le mauvais exemple qu'ils donnent aux prisonniers employés sur le

964 AN F/14/11331, 2 August, 1918.

965 AN F/14/11331 18 July, 1917.

même chanter.⁹⁶⁶

Another port that expressed grave dissatisfaction with its Chinese workers was Rouen. Again, a primary objection was the belief amongst employers that they were incapable of working with coal. It was also alleged that the Chinese hid their laziness behind their inability to speak French. Relations with the local community were also poor, and as early as October 1917, the authorities in Rouen placed a guard over the Chinese during meals to prevent them from going into town. By September, the hostility was such that a proposal to build a shelter to protect the Chinese camp in the town from German aerial bombardment was rejected on the grounds that it would provoke a public outcry.⁹⁶⁷

In general, it was felt that the Chinese workers in Rouen had caused innumerable problems due to their low productivity. There had been a minimum of 2 letters a day complaining about that. The authorities argued that they had tried all sorts of means to counter this; they had improved their food and lodgings, provided umbrellas. They had even set up a school to educate 20 Chinese to speak French produced little result, with only 2 displaying both goodwill and aptitude. There was an underlying hostility between the French employers and workers and the Chinese, which had manifested itself more than once.⁹⁶⁸

The chief engineer at the port, Detoef, believed that the reasons for this hostility were firstly that the Chinese had little aptitude for heavy work and little taste for outdoor work; secondly that there were limited sanctions available to employers to force the Chinese to work and thirdly the poor relations between the Chinese, confined in their camp, and isolated from the French workers who considered the Chinese “comme une sorte de sauvage.” As the Chinese couldn’t be kept totally isolated from the French – because they needed to work with specialist workers – Detoef argued that it was essential that hostility between them had to be reduced. He believed this was unlikely and suggested the withdrawal of the current Chinese workforce in its entirety, leaving only the supervisors and interpreters to work with

966 AN F/14/11331 25 April, 1918.

967 AN F/14/11331, 11 October, 1917, 10 October, 1917, 18 September, 1918.

their replacements.⁹⁶⁹

Further grave incidents between the civil and Chinese workforce over the next months saw another request for the entire contingent to be removed, though the manpower crisis was such that a new contingent was requested.⁹⁷⁰

In order to try and encourage local employers to utilise the Chinese, the Office National de la Navigation sought to reduce taxes on employers in Rouen who hired Chinese.⁹⁷¹ This proved unsuccessful, as an examination of the correspondence between the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Chef du Service des Travailleurs Coloniaux shows. The Ministry proposed reducing in half the Chinese contingent, excluding those “least apt at working”. This suggestion was rejected as unfair on whoever would have to take on those 500, inept, indisciplined workers. The Ministry responded by acknowledging the difficulties in finding alternative employment for “les incapables ou les fortes têtes”, but nevertheless insisted it was vital that they were eliminated from Rouen.⁹⁷² In December, the port authorities argued it was still more important to remove the 500 Chinese as more and more port operatives refused to employ Chinese at all.

L'Intendance Transit, refuse de les employer dans les magasins de la station [...] La Compagnie de Transit Jules ROY, renvoie au camp systematiquement les corvées qui lui sont attribuées [...] Les Affreteurs Réunis, les Docks de ROUEN ont toujours refusé la main d'œuvre chinoise. La Maison HAREL & CAPELLE n'accepte d'en employer que très rarement; depuis l'échauffourée de Février dernier où son Chef de manutention faillit être victime de la fureur des célestes.⁹⁷³

That the problems with Chinese workers included violence as well as low productivity was also noted in a report by Hupner, one of the engineers at the port. After mentioning the derisory productivity of the Chinese and the hostility they aroused amongst the civil workforce, he claimed that a murder committed by Chinese from an

968 AN F/14/11331, 25 January, 1918.

969 AN F/14/11331, 25 January, 1918.

970 AN F/14/11331, 23 March, 1918.

971 AN F/14/11331, 20 April, 1918.

972 AN F/14/11331, 10 November, 13 November, 22 November, 1918.

973 AN F/14/11331, 10 December, 1918. The rather poetic description of the assault by the Chinese: “la fureur des célestes” nonetheless emphasises their exoticism.

English camp had caused the local press to comment on “the disquiet of the population about contact with exotic workers”. He argued that all these factors made it very difficult to administer the port, and argued that unless the very worst offenders were immediately withdrawn, it would soon become impossible for any Chinese workforce to operate in Rouen, even a hand-picked one.⁹⁷⁴

These complaints were replicated across the country. In Cherbourg, they censured the Chinese for their lack of productivity, their attitude, their lack of zeal, patience and their heavy-handedness, while some port operators there displayed a “répugnance invincible” towards the Chinese workforce.⁹⁷⁵

At Le Havre, the Société en participation des travaux du Port du Havre, bemoaned that

Nous ne pouvons employer des Chinois pour ces travaux de règlements et d’empierrement, ces ouvriers sont trop faibles et inaptes à ce travail pour lequel il faut des hommes robustes et travailleurs; nous avons pu nous en rendre compte après des essais infructueux avec nos travailleurs Chinois.⁹⁷⁶

Authorities noted that there had been some regrettable incidents in the Besançon region where soldiers on leave had been incited by sections of the civil population to shoot at Chinese workers.⁹⁷⁷

There was less and less demand for new contingents, the chief engineer for the Finistère ports reported that it was the opinion of the authorities there that employing Chinese workers would do little to help them and that they’d struggle to find any employers willing to utilise them.⁹⁷⁸ Chargueraud wrote in a letter that it was sometimes impossible to allocate groups of less than 100 Chinese.⁹⁷⁹

The complaints about the Chinese made regular reference to violence between them

974 AN F/14/11331, 11 December, 1918.

975 AN F/14/11331, 24 June, 1918; 9 September, 1918.

976 AN F/14/11331, 22 August, 1918.

977 AN F/14/11331, 1 March, 1918.

978 AN F/14/11331, 3 September, 1918.

979 AN F/14/11331, 11 September, 1917.

and the French. Sometimes there were more detailed accounts of the fights, which offer some insight to the roots of the hostility. One such report was by Clavel, the chief engineer for the Gironde ports. A soldier named Gezequel made a comment to a Chinese worker who responded with a punch. Gezequel complained, and the imprisonment of the Chinaman was ordered. He objected loudly, and was supported by his comrades, who were armed with batons. Clavel noted that the North Chinese, all former soldiers and thus “relatively disciplined” always maintained a cohesive unity. After several warnings through an interpreter, calm was restored and the offending Chinaman was taken to prison and his transfer to Marseille requested. No further repercussions had resulted or were expected.⁹⁸⁰

A more serious incident occurred in Rouen in January 1918. A report was made by Lieutenant Turret, who alleged the responsibility lay with the Chinese. According to the Turret report, a Chinese worker wanted to sleep during work, four soldiers there tried to force him back to his work. One soldier jostled him, to which the Chinaman responded by kicking him in the thigh. The other soldiers hastened to defend their comrade, while two Chinese came to aid their compatriot. One of the soldiers fled and was unsuccessfully pursued. Then the Chinaman who had initially been involved returned and attacked another soldier, hitherto uninvolved. This soldier and a foreman who sought to help him were forced to take refuge with the customs police. However, the situation continued to escalate, with around 20 Chinese now armed themselves with batons and iron bars. The civil populace did the same to defend the soldier and foreman. In an attempt to control the situation, the customs police fired a couple of revolver shots at the crowd. By now the Chinese contingent had grown to 70 people and they launched an assault on the police station, breaking the windows, capturing the soldier and threatening to throw him into the Seine. The Naval police intervened, saving the soldier and using guns and bayonets to disperse the rioters who took refuge in their camp. There were no fatalities, but both sides sustained some injuries.

During his inquiry, Turret reported that he had encountered a hostile attitude from the civil population who disliked not just the Chinese workers, but even their European supervisors, to the extent that he himself had been insulted by a civilian

⁹⁸⁰ AN F/14/11331, 11 January, 1918.

who argued that those who commanded Chinese workers were no better than them.⁹⁸¹

Commenting on the situation, Detoef noted that the next day the Chinese refused to work, claiming that they were afraid of their French colleagues. Simultaneously several employers reported that their workers, concerned for their safety, were refusing to work with or near the Chinese. It was suggested the employers were doing nothing to counter this mood as they saw an opportunity to remove the Chinese workforce and replace it with an alternative one.⁹⁸²

Not everyone blamed the Chinese for the difficulties that arose, with regional and national authorities being more inclined to share the blame than the administrators and employers of the ports. The *contrôleur régional des Travailleurs Coloniaux de la 11^{ème} Région*, Grenes, blamed animosity from dockers, and unwillingness by the employers to pay more than five-eighths of the wage going to French workers.⁹⁸³

Reporting on the situation in the port of Brest, M. Grenes suggested that:

1) Il règne une certaine animosité contre les travailleurs coloniaux [Chinese] parmi le personnel employé au déchargement ou au chargement des navires au Port de Commerce.

2) Il résulte de la correspondance du Capitaine Chef du groupement chinois, qu'il n'a pas été possible d'établir dans toutes les conditions désirables voulues, un essai de travail au tonnage en vue d'obtenir un meilleur rendement des chinois.

3) Malgré les % formels de Monsieur le Ministre de la Guerre les travailleurs coloniaux ne jouissent pas de la même solde à beaucoup près, que les ouvriers français de même catégorie employés sur les mêmes chantiers.⁹⁸⁴

When Rouen demanded the removal of 210 Chinese workers their request was granted, but the *Service de l'Organisation des travailleurs coloniaux en France* commented that if the Chinese workers hadn't given satisfaction, that was largely due to the hostility of dockers and employers who had treated them roughly.⁹⁸⁵

981 AN F/14/11331, 21 January, 1918.

982 AN F/14/11331, 21 January, 1918.

983 AN F/14/11331 27 February, 1918.

984 AN F/14/11331 16 February, 1918.

985 AN F/14/11331, 24 April, 1919.

By contrast, the Chef du Transport Maritime, Dupuy, as quoted in the introduction blamed the workers; who were not just untrained and lacking enough interpreters but also had more fundamental defects. Dupuy suggested that the Chinese should only be used for light and repetitive work. Most of them weren't strong enough for the heavy work required in the ports and they'd be better employed in the factories where the work was always the same and surveillance was easy.⁹⁸⁶

The Gironde ports also saw a dispute between central and local authorities. When the ports were criticised by the state for the standard of the accommodation they offered to the Chinese, the ports administrator, Clavel, responded by criticising their indiscipline and their weak productivity. Given this information, the War ministry recommended that the employment of the Chinese be transferred to the Service de l'Organisation des travailleurs coloniaux en France.⁹⁸⁷

Despite these problems, Chinese workers continued to be utilised in the French ports for the duration of the war, testifying to the shortages of workers that existed. Even as late as October 1918, the Port de la Pallice envisaged constructing a camp for Chinese workers that would initially house 500 men, but with the potential to increase capacity to 800.⁹⁸⁸ This did not mean that the workforce was welcome though, and as soon as the war finished the various ports made clear their resistance to further employment of non-white labour.

A letter from the President of the Association des Employeurs de Main d'Œuvre dans les Ports de France to the Minister of Public Works and Transport declared that the "unanimous" opinion of the employers was that they had little desire to maintain an Asiatic workforce in France. "Son manque de résistance, sa paresse et sa inexactitude" were the major factors in a poor rate of productivity. By contrast, Kabyles and Moroccans had been appreciated in several ports, but even then, there

⁹⁸⁶ AN F/14/11331, 11 April, 1918.

⁹⁸⁷ AN F/14/11331, 18 July, 1918; 24 July, 1918.

⁹⁸⁸ AN F/14/11331 3 October, 1918.

were “grave misgivings” about employing significant numbers of these workers without a process of state selection.⁹⁸⁹

An assessment of the relative worth of Chinese workers compared to other foreign workers employed in the maritime ports is possible as on the 30th of November 1918, the Chef du Services Central d’Exploitation des Ports Maritimes asked the various ports to compare the productivity of various foreigners.

At Calais, the chief of production, Rigal argued that the individual value of Algerians and Indochinese was for all work clearly inferior to that of the French, though it was heavily dependent on the skills of foremen and team leaders. Their productivity was clearly better when they were used in commercial warehouses than when working for the state. On average, Rigal believed that 3 Arabs did the work of 2 Frenchmen.⁹⁹⁰ At the port of St Louis du Rhône they considered the Italians work to be almost as good as the French, while the Kabyles were worth 80% and the Chinese 50-60% of native workers.⁹⁹¹

In Brest, they declared they had never wanted to employ Algerians who couldn’t deal with heavy loads and had low productivity. They believed that it took 2-3 Algerians to do the work of a Frenchman. However, in the munitions factories had performed better thanks to their “suppleness”. The Chinese were believed to be capable of regular, if not heavy work.⁹⁹² In the ports of Loiret and the Morbihan, they preferred Chinese and Madagascan labour to Kabyle and Indochinese. They didn’t compare either to French workers.⁹⁹³

In St-Nazaire, Kabyles used by private industry had given good results, while as attested to above the performance of the Chinese was held to be deplorable. They argued that they had not employed enough foreigners for useful evaluation.⁹⁹⁴ By contrast, in Cherbourg the Chinese were held to be better than the Kabyles as long as

989 AN F/14/11337 17 January, 1919.

990 AN F/14/11337 22 December, 1918.

991 AN F/14/11337 28 December, 1918.

992 AN F/14/11337 22 December, 1918.

993 AN F/14/11337 9 December, 1918.

994 AN F/14/11337 14 December, 1918.

they were not badly supervised, but still only offered 45% of the value of a domestic worker, while prisoners of war were worth 75%. In Rouen too, prisoners of war were felt to offer 75% of the worth of French labour, while the Chinese were worth only half.⁹⁹⁵ For the Cherbourg authorities the problems with foreign workers were mainly ascribed to climate, and they recommended that workers be hired from Northern Spain where they'd be used to the conditions. Colonial and Chinese workers could be sent to the South of France.

In Rochefort & Tonny-Charente they were not keen on employing foreigners after an unsuccessful attempt to utilise Spaniards (who had left in search of better pay) and only one factory in Rochefort had employed colonial workers, these were Moroccans who had proved satisfactory, offering $\frac{3}{4}$ of the productivity of a Frenchman. The Tonny-Charente didn't want to employ foreigners, feeling it unnecessary.⁹⁹⁶ In La Rochelle, they claimed that Europeans were much better workers, with the Italians particularly impressive. The Spanish worked well, as long as they were well supervised, the Belgians and the Poles also. Overall their productivity was comparable to the French. As for non-white labour, Moroccans, Kabyles and Algerians were all felt to be mediocre. The Cantonese were unsatisfactory, though those from North China were better. The Senegalese labour was very poor and colonial labour as a whole only equated to 30-40% of French labour. Neither St-Valery nor Fécamp had employed foreign labour either, with the latter emphasizing that it had no desire to do so.⁹⁹⁷ There were also no foreigners used in the ports of the Côtes-du-Nord or at Nice.⁹⁹⁸

The authorities of the port in Dieppe claimed that the Belgians and Italians they had employed were both useful. They hadn't utilised colonial workers, so they couldn't comment directly, though they did mention that the British in the area who had employed Chinese labourers were very unhappy with them.⁹⁹⁹ Only Spanish and Portuguese had been utilised at Bayonne, where they were rated as 70% effectiveness.

995 AN F/14/11337 22 December, 1918, Undated.

996 AN F/14/11337 17 December, 1918.

997 AN F/14/11337 15 December, 1918, 19 December, 1918.

998 AN F/14/11337 4 December, 1918, 12 December, 1918.

999 AN F/14/11337 11 December, 1918.

At St-Malo there had also been limited use of foreign workers, the handful of Tunisians they'd used were slightly less useful than the German prisoners who themselves offered two-thirds of the utility of the French.¹⁰⁰⁰

In Nantes, they rated the Belgians as the best, followed by the Italians. The Spanish offered reasonable output, but were difficult employees. The Greeks were largely passable, with some very good workers, the Algerians passable, but often weak and indolent. The Chinese were also believed to be weak and difficult to discipline. For all the non-European contingents it was considered impossible to assign them work with coal or dirty products.¹⁰⁰¹ In Marseille, they felt the Italians were the best, the Spanish were good, but for their temperaments and were thus worth only 67% of French workers. The Kabyle labourers had some strengths, but on the whole colonial labour was very mediocre, and should only be called upon as a last resort.¹⁰⁰²

In the Gironde, they simply expressed their preferences in percentage terms, with the French and the Belgians acquiring 100%, the Spanish, the Italians and the Kabyles/Moroccans all got 90%. The Portuguese were also reasonably well regarded, with 75%. Less appreciated were the Senegalese at 50, the Chinese at 40 and the Indochinese at 30.¹⁰⁰³ The port of Cette gave similar ratings to those of the Gironde for the Italians, Spanish and the Senegalese, but were very negative about the Moroccans, who were given only 30% and described as naturally "maladroit" and "gauche."¹⁰⁰⁴ This table averages all the measurable ratings given to the various nationalities.

1000 AN F/14/11337 14 December, 1918.

1001 AN F/14/11337 26 December, 1918.

1002 AN F/14/11337 31 December, 1918.

1003 AN F/14/11337 29 December, 1918.

1004 AN F/14/11337 13 December, 1918.

Table 6

Average rating of foreign contingents in French ports.

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| French | 100 |
| Belgians | 100 |
| Italians | 80 |
| Spanish | 76.25 |
| Portuguese | 72.50 |
| German PoW | 72.33 |
| North Africans | 60.25 |
| Greeks | 50 |
| Senegalese | 47.5 |
| Chinese | 44 |
| Indo-Chinese | 30 |

Apart from the low score for the Greeks, based solely upon the unimpressive performance of their contingent in Nantes, the hierarchy of European over non-European labour is unchallenged. Of the foreign labour, the North African workers score considerably higher than the Senegalese, with the Chinese and the Indochinese last. That ratings that equated the work of one Frenchman with that of 2 or even 3 colonial workers was taken seriously can be gathered from other sources. For instance, a M. de Poorter requested 20 French mobilised miners for his operation. When this was turned down, he requested 40 foreign miners, with a preference for PoWs.¹⁰⁰⁵ M. Mathey, in charge of the management of rivers and forests claimed that it was obvious to him that Asiatic or African labour could not be equated with European. From what he had heard about Algerian labour, it was roughly a quarter inferior to European labour. The original draft had said “a fifth” but this had been corrected, indicating that this was not simply a random figure.¹⁰⁰⁶

Asked how they wanted to replace prisoners of war at the end of the conflict, employers in Rouen declared their preference for Belgians, then Spanish, Bosnians, Italians and Poles. Chinese and colonial workers not envisaged as it was felt that they could not deal with the rainy climate. For the authorities in Nantes they wanted Belgians, Russians and Poles and the exclusion of colonial workers. Caen’s order of

1005 AN F/12/8008, June 1916.

1006 AN F/12/8004, 13 March, 1916.

preference was Belgians, Spanish, Italians, Kabyles, Algerians, Moroccans and lastly Senegalese. Indo-Chinese and Chinese workers were considered unable to cope with either the work or the climate. The report added that Kabyles and Chinese should be kept separate in order to avoid the constant brawls between them. Given that the Société Normande de Métallurgie employed Chinese workers it seemed best if Caen was only allocated European workers. Other ports were more forthright. In St-Nazaire, it was reported that neither the Chamber of Commerce nor the Association of Employers wanted at any price to employ colonial or foreign labour. In the minutes of the meeting where this was decided, the employers declared they'd rather suspend operations than hire foreigners, if French labour proved insufficient. Honfleur declared that they hoped to do without foreign workers and no-one would accept "exotiques" workers. Similarly, Brest declared itself unanimously and resolutely opposed to the introduction of a colonial workforce. In St-Malo, Trouville and the ports of the Côtes du Nord, foreigners were not required. Only the port of Granville broke the trend, declaring their preference for Moroccans.

One of the reasons why the ports may have displayed a general preference for North Africans (and even sub-Saharan Africans who generally had a poor reputation as workers) over Chinese and Indochinese workers may have been the nature of the work in the docks. It was considered to be very arduous, physical work which the relatively robust North Africans could manage, but that the Chinese and Indochinese could not, given that they were traditionally seen as being frailer, if perhaps more skilful.

Consistency of attitudes.

Foreign labour was usually utilised during the war in a similar fashion to its use before the conflict. They worked in groups, under French supervision, doing unskilled or semi-skilled work. There was little opportunity to overcome pre-war prejudices. When these workers were praised it was usually not for the quality of their work but for their docile behaviour, and often in phrases that echoed pre-war assessments. For example a very positive article on Algerian and Kabyle immigrant workers in France

printed in January 1914 lauded them as sober, reliable and well-behaved.¹⁰⁰⁷ In a 1917 report from the Prefect of the Saône-et-Loire on the Tunisian agricultural workforce it was claimed “ce sont des hommes doux, sobres, d’un naturel paisible et d’un maniement facile, à condition qu’on les traite avec justice.” Admittedly “[i]ls ne sont pas tous sans doute au courant des procédés de culture européens” but their use had given excellent results.¹⁰⁰⁸

Female labour also failed to have much impact on male attitudes towards women’s capabilities. The law of July 3, 1915 did give paternal authority to married woman for the duration of the hostilities, if it was impossible for the husband to be contacted to give his approval. However, this was done out of necessity, and hardly hints at a significant change in attitudes.¹⁰⁰⁹ In any case, the soldiers at the front continued to offer instruction to those back home. As Baconnier, Minet and Soler note:

Dans la majorité des cas, leur intervention se limite à des conseils, mais parfois ils exercent un véritable contrôle de ce qui est fait en leur absence, demandent des comptes rendus, envoient des ordres et gèrent directement comme par le passé les affaires familiales malgré les difficultés dues à la situation.¹⁰¹⁰

They conclude that

les hommes acceptent mal de voir les femmes empiéter sur leur domaine. Et de loin, ils essaient de conserver le contrôle des affaires en les traitant en mineures incapables et irresponsables.¹⁰¹¹

While it was practically impossible for the work of women to be controlled by soldiers hundreds of miles away, that many sought to do so is indicative of the resilience of ideas of female incapacity with regard to operating in certain areas. The presence of many women amongst the strikers of 1917 came as a surprise to the authorities and syndicalists alike.¹⁰¹² When there was discontent amongst the female personnel at the Dolle-Chaurey factory, due to low wages compared to other factories,

1007 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 20 January, 1914.

1008 Marguin (ed.) *La Saône-et-Loire pendant la guerre de 14-18*, 22 May, 1917.

1009 Thébaud, *La femme au temps de la guerre*, pp. 209-210.

1010 Baconnier et al. *La Plume au Fusil*, p. 288, examples pp. 288-291, p. 294.

1011 Baconnier et al. *La Plume au Fusil*, p. 295. David Englander also notes that advice was regularly sent back from the front. Englander, “The French Soldier. 1914-18” p. 63.

1012 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 94.

the police attributed it to malign male influence: “il semble que cet état d’esprit soit la conséquence évidente de la propagande faite récemment par les ouvriers mobilisés ...” When the police reported on similar complaints amongst male workers their claims were usually examined closely to see if they were justified.¹⁰¹³ In Anjou, the perception that some men were profiting from the family allocation without working prompted action from the state: “C’est au point que le préfet inquiet invite les maires à rechercher les réfugiés adultes hommes qui touchent l’allocation et qui refusent le travail.”¹⁰¹⁴ It was clearly not considered a significant problem for women to claim the allocation while refusing to work.

The wider scope of employment available to women during the war did not end the division between “men’s work” and “women’s work”. Certain areas of employment could move from one category to the other as the qualities and aptitudes that they were believed to require changed, but possession of those aptitudes was held to arise from traditional gendered stereotypes. Significant sections of the French economy had already begun a modernisation process in the years before the war, and the efforts to maximise productivity during the conflict often hastened this. This modernisation often involved a move away from skilled artisanal work towards unskilled and semi-skilled factory work. In the context of this modernisation, debates over female labour during the war are inseparable from the debates over skill that preceded and postdated the war.

The very concept of skilled work was a gendered concept with women’s working qualities being broadly perceived as corresponding with unskilled or semi-skilled work, while (French) men had the capacity for skilled work. This coexisted with a discourse that sought to understand female labour outside the home as an extension of women’s homemaking skills

For *La Dépêche* female abilities included an ability to do simple, repetitive work and to be calm under pressure, but not work that was complicated or physically demanding. It described the factory work that women were believed to be capable of

¹⁰¹³ AN F/7/13365 Reports from the police in the Haute-Saône to the Sûreté Générale. 1 December, 1916; 15 November, 1917.

as primarily work that was purely mechanical “qui consistent en mouvement toujours les mêmes et indéfiniment répétés.” They could also be given work that was more varied but not more complicated work, with less mechanisation involved.

Enfin au dernier se placeraient des travaux qui exigent, non pas plus force et d’adresse, mais plus de sang-froid et de décision calme: le type est en action électrique ou hydraulique qui, de haut d’une passerelle, par le simple pression d’un bouton, met on branle les blocs de fer rouge destinés à passer entre les cylindres d’un laminoir.¹⁰¹⁵

Even this seemingly simple task was held to cause problems for women. “Il paraît que la puissance même du mécanisme qu’elles commandent trouble en effare la plupart des femmes à qui on les confie.”¹⁰¹⁶ However, with a short apprenticeship, they were able to get over their fear.

La Petite Gironde advocated women entering areas of the economy which they had not before. Yet their suggestion was informed by traditional ideas of feminine characteristics.

La main d’œuvre féminine - et plutôt que main d’œuvre, il faudrait dire la capacité de travail à tous les degrés - devra être employée après la guerre beaucoup plus qu’elle ne l’était avant [...] L’industrie hôtelière, et surtout l’industrie hôtelière de tourisme, est une de celles qui peuvent offrir à l’élément féminin français un champ d’action particulièrement en rapport avec des aptitudes générales.¹⁰¹⁷

Because, of course, she had natural homemaking abilities.

Another article on women in the hotel industry also called for women to take jobs in the hotels in order to prevent those jobs having to go to foreigners.

L’industrie hôtelière manque de main d’œuvre... à l’heure où, précisément, viennent les jours où il la lui faudra plus nombreuse qu’hier. Car un immense flot d’étrangers est tout prêt à couvrir la France aux premiers signes d’une paix victorieuse que chaque jour passé approche.

1014 Jacobzone, *En Anjou*, p. 273.

1015 *La Dépêche*, 4 December, 1916.

1016 *La Dépêche*, 4 December, 1916.

1017 *La Petite Gironde*, 2 January, 1916.

Nos hôteliers sont unanimement résolus à ne plus employer qu'un personnel exclusivement français, à condition que ce personnel ne fasse pas défaut. Mais tant d'hommes sont disparus déjà que la femme trouvera dans l'hôtellerie un plus grand nombre d'emplois où elle pourra s'utiliser,¹⁰¹⁸

Even those women who were employed by the army were portrayed in traditionally feminine terms. *Le Petit Journal* described women working in ancillary services for the military as “doing the housekeeping of France.”¹⁰¹⁹ An article by a respected doctor, Adolphe Pinard, offers another example. He was arguing that all pregnant women and women who had just given birth should be removed from factories. He claimed that these women were not needed for munitions work because there were sufficiently few women having children at that moment to allow them to be effectively replaced by men. “Ils se spécialiseront aussi vite que les femmes dans la *production des munitions*.” Meanwhile “La femme, elle, n'a qu'une aptitude naturelle pour laquelle elle a été créée: *la production de l'enfant*. Ne détruisons pas cette œuvre de la nature. Favorisons-la.”¹⁰²⁰ This is revealing, in that it shows that munitions work was seen so much as women's work that Pinard had to state that men would be as capable as women at it. It also showed that his idea as to the basic and primary function of women had not been changed.

The belief in women's ability to make munitions effectively was widespread, but it was strictly specific to munitions, as Léonard Rosenthal noted in *Le Temps*, “La nécessité de la fabrication des munitions a permis à des milliers de femmes de gagner largement leur vie dans les travaux de manoeuvre.” When the industrialist wanted to make other things than shells “... il cherchera des artisans, et non des manoeuvres; à ce moment, la femme sera amenée à reprendre son ancien métier.”¹⁰²¹

A comparison of the job advertisements that appeared in *La Dépêche* in the summers of 1913 and 1918 shows the limits of change.

1018 *La Petite Gironde*, 26 April, 1916.

1019 Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 203.

1020 *Le Matin*, 6 December, 1916 (emphasis in the original).

1021 *Le Temps* 11 April, 1917. Rosenthal's argument was later quoted by Grunebaum-Ballin, President of the Commission du placement des marins et de la main d'œuvre maritime, who suggested

Table 7Percentage of employment advertisements aimed at women in *La Dépêche*.¹⁰²²

| Year | Jobs for women | Service | Clothing | Sales | Others |
|------|----------------|---------|----------|-------|--------|
| 1913 | 32.02 | 57.97 | 26.08 | 4.35 | 11.59 |
| 1918 | 33.33 | 53.49 | 27.90 | 2.33 | 16.28 |

Most significant is the lack of change in the percentage of jobs advertised, aimed at women. The type of jobs being offered to women was still largely the same, dominated by service jobs (which includes chambermaiding, cooking, ironing and laundry as well as domestic service) and work producing clothes and shoes. The slight increase in employment opportunities in the latter category at the expense of the former may be due to changing patterns of employment, or to the financial hardship of the war reducing the demand for service jobs, but it doesn't suggest any change in what types of work were suited for women. The next most prevalent offer of employment was as saleswomen or shop assistants, but this was much less common than jobs in service or textiles. Moreover, this type of employment was still much more likely to be advertised towards men.

In making the distinction between skilled and unskilled work, and placing women as unskilled, the French often paired women with immigrant labour. Reporting on the needs of the railways, where there was serious undermanning, Claveille, the Undersecretary of State for Transport argued that foreigners were in general not very useful as a workforce, being easily corrupted and prone to absenteeism. Colonial workers could only be used as unskilled labour and were incapable of being trained. As for women, Claveille argued that by 1st April 1917 the French network employment of women was probably at its maximum. He argued that they would have filled the easy jobs first and the only jobs that remained demanded a physical effort that was beyond most women, or an acclimitisation that would take too long.¹⁰²³

This was characteristic of French employment discourse and practice, which tended to restrict both women and colonial men to unskilled and repetitive labour, with the

that it was possible Rosenthal may have been exaggerating the lack of technical skills acquired by women working in munitions. AN F/12/8001, July, 1917.

¹⁰²² *La Dépêche*, 1-14 July, 1913. 1-14 July, 1918.

latter tending to be given work only in large groups.

In the armament factories in Lyon, there were 7550 foreigners employed, representing 10.68% of the total employees. Of the 192 factories, 155 employed foreigners. The nationalities of these foreigners are recorded in Tables 8 and 9.

As can be seen from the tables, the largest number of foreigners were from Spain, though the number of factories employing Italians was significantly higher. The figures also display the different ways in which white and non-white workers were hired. European workers were generally employed as individuals or small groups, while African or Asian workers tended to be employed in much bigger contingents.

Table 8Nationality of workers in national defence industries in Lyon, June 1917.¹⁰²⁴

| Recorded nationality | Number of workers employed | % of foreign workers | Number of factories employed in |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Spanish | 2237 | 29.63 | 76 |
| Italians | 1562 | 20.69 | 121 |
| Africans | 647 | 8.57 | 1 |
| Swiss | 578 | 7.66 | 73 |
| Algerians | 454 | 6.01 | 14 |
| Chinese | 398 | 5.27 | 5 |
| Greeks | 356 | 4.72 | 11 |
| Belgians | 264 | 3.50 | 34 |
| Alsations | 189 | 2.50 | 33 |
| Moroccans | 177 | 2.34 | 4 |
| Kabyles | 165 | 2.19 | 9 |
| Arabs | 122 | 1.62 | 2 |
| Serbs | 69 | 0.91 | 8 |
| Egyptians | 55 | 0.73 | 3 |
| British (<i>anglais</i>) | 53 | 0.70 | 7 |
| Russians | 39 | 0.55 | 12 |
| Tunisians | 33 | 0.44 | 3 |
| Cypriots | 30 | 0.40 | 1 |
| Indochinese (<i>tonkinois</i>) | 30 | 0.40 | 1 |
| Luxembourgeois | 22 | 0.29 | 7 |
| Armenians | 18 | 0.24 | 4 |
| Senegalese | 12 | 0.16 | 2 |
| Rest | 40 | 0.53 | 27 |

1024 AN F/7/13365, 7 June, 1917. The "Rest" category is made up of nationalities with less than 10 workers in the factories. Those nationalities were Argentinians, Americans, Brazilians, Czechs, Dutch, Indians, Japanese, Mexicans, Peruvians, Poles, Portuguese, Romanians, and Syrians.

Table 9Size of foreign contingents in national defence industries in Lyon, June 1917.¹⁰²⁵

| Nationality | Number of workers | Number of contingents | Size of contingent | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| | | | 1-2 | 3-9 | 10-29 | 30-99 | 100+ |
| Spanish | 2237 | 76 | 39 | 24 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Italians | 1562 | 121 | 43 | 44 | 27 | 5 | 2 |
| Africans | 647 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Swiss | 578 | 73 | 35 | 29 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Algerians | 454 | 14 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Chinese | 398 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Greeks | 356 | 11 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Belgians | 264 | 34 | 19 | 12 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Alsations | 189 | 33 | 15 | 14 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Moroccans | 177 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Kabyles | 165 | 9 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Arabs | 122 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Serbs | 69 | 8 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Egyptians | 55 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| British | 53 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Russians | 39 | 12 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Tunisians | 33 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cypriots | 30 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Indochinese | 30 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Luxembourgeois | 22 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Armenians | 18 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Senegalese | 12 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Rest | 40 | 31 | 25 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7550 | 458 | 219 | 140 | 55 | 30 | 14 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Europe (including Russia and Armenia) | 5435 | 401 | 190 | 131 | 51 | 16 | 8 |
| Africa and the Middle East | 1673 | 39 | 19 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Asia | 434 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Americas | 14 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

1025 AN F/7/13365, 7 June, 1917. The "Rest" category is made up of nationalities with less than 10 workers in the factories. Those nationalities were Argentinians, Americans, Brazilians, Czechs, Dutch, Indians, Japanese, Mexicans, Peruvians, Poles, Portuguese, Romanians, and Syrians.

The tables above don't indicate which nationalities were employed in skilled, or unskilled work, but the figures from the Ministry of the Marine's employees from 1 June 1917 are more revealing. One of the most striking things is that the Chinese are classified alongside colonial workers, rather than with the foreign workers, so clearly racial origin was considered fundamental in the compiling of these figures. The French and Belgians, including military personnel, are mainly employed in skilled work, with foreigners largely in unskilled positions, a distinction even clearer for colonial workers. Women are entirely in non-professional employment.

Table 10

Nationalities of workers employed by the Ministry of the Marine, June 1917.¹⁰²⁶

| Workers | Professionals | % | Labourers | % | Total |
|----------------------|---------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Military | 9902 | 79.66 | 2529 | 20.34 | 12431 |
| French and Belgian | 24669 | 80.38 | 6021 | 19.62 | 30690 |
| Foreign | 39 | 42.39 | 53 | 57.61 | 92 |
| Colonial and Chinese | 827 | 22.68 | 2820 | 77.32 | 3647 |
| Prisoners of War | 517 | 17.29 | 2473 | 82.71 | 2990 |
| Women | 0 | 0.00 | 14967 | 100.00 | 14967 |

The system of classifying the Chinese workers alongside colonial workers rather than with other foreign workers was not universally employed, as shown in these figures for employment on the railway network, also from June 1917. The figures do present the same theme of French workers being employed in skilled positions at a much higher percentage than colonial workers or women.

Table 11

Nationality of workers on the French railway network, June 1917.¹⁰²⁷

| Workers | Skilled | % | Unskilled | % |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
| French men | 5296 | 29.99 | 12351 | 70.01 |
| Foreigners (including Chinese) | 1485 | 27.61 | 3894 | 72.39 |
| Colonial Workers | 94 | 5.58 | 1591 | 94.42 |
| Prisoners of War | 2066 | 28.85 | 5494 | 71.15 |
| Women | 425 | 2.66 | 15564 | 97.34 |

¹⁰²⁶ AN F/14/11333 Ministry of the Marine, 1 June 1917

¹⁰²⁷ AN F/14/11333 Report from the sub-secretary of state for transport, 1 June, 1917

The predominance of unskilled jobs amongst women is also evident from the salary tariffs as set by the Ministry of Armament, applying to the munitions factories.

In Nantes, there were 4 categories of workers. A limited range of unskilled occupations were divided amongst: women, with a pay scale from 0.40 to 0.50 francs per hour; young workers aged from sixteen to eighteen, whose pay scale ranged from 0.30-0.35; and non-professional men, paid between 0.45 and 0.55 francs. There was also a long and diverse list of professional jobs whose pay scale ranged from 0.55-0.90 francs, where there was no distinction by age or sex.¹⁰²⁸ Similarly in St Etienne and Roanne, the division was made between professional salaries, which were uniform, and non-professional ones, divided by age and sex.¹⁰²⁹

A report by Olivier Bascou, the Prefect of the Gironde, detailing minimum salaries in the wood industry is also revealing, explicitly separating female labour from skilled labour and assessing the former as significantly less valuable.

Table 12

Minimum Salaries in the Gironde Wood Industry, June 1917¹⁰³⁰

| Occupation | Francs per hour |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Menuisiers | 0.80 |
| Charpentiers-Menuisiers | 0.80 |
| Charpentiers | 0.90 |
| Toupilleurs-Mouluriers | 0.80 |
| Toupilleurs débutants | 0.75 |
| Ouvriers débutants | 0.65 |
| Manœuvres spécialisés | 0.70 |
| Manœuvres sans spécialité | 0.60 |
| Femmes | 0.50 |

An advert from “Le service ouvrier du ministère de l’Armement” in Lyon, called for workers for a variety of (male) professional jobs – masons, carpenters, joiners, builders and so on, before concluding with “femmes pour travaux diverse

¹⁰²⁸ AN F/14/11334 03 March, 1917

¹⁰²⁹ AN F/14/11334 28 June, 1917

¹⁰³⁰ AN F/14/11334, 30 June, 1917.

d'usage".¹⁰³¹ Showing a similar distinction between specialised male work and generic female work, a police report listed the occupations of workers affiliated to the CGT at the Fremaux factory in Lyon. The 21 men were divided into 9 different occupations, most of them specialised, while all but one of the 12 women were described as "spécialisée". The sole exception was a simple "manœuvre".¹⁰³²

When the committee of economic action in the Nantes region discussed demobilisation, the committee suggested that the order in which demobilisation should occur be determined by employment. In descending order, these were: "Chefs d'exploitation, propriétaires exploitant eux-mêmes, ingénieurs agricoles, ouvriers agricoles, chefs d'industries, techniciens et spécialistes, ouvriers."¹⁰³³ While the committee didn't discuss the rationale for this sequence, it can be reasonably assumed that it correlated with how satisfactorily these tasks were being carried out by the interim workforce. In which case, it is noticeable that as well as the unsurprising significance given to agriculture in Brittany, it also privileges skilled workers over unskilled, suggesting that the perceived inadequacies of the interim workforce were seen as more related to skill than brute strength.

Often employment of women seemed to be undertaken as much for social reasons as on job suitability. Women were required to demonstrate either their suitability in terms of morality, or else their having suffered as a result of the war. Gallieni, in December 1915, on the selection of auxiliary women to be employed in Central administration, stated that they should be chosen primarily amongst wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of soldiers killed or wounded, and amongst those in charge of families. The candidates had to be French, and "présenter toutes garanties au point de vue de la moralité".¹⁰³⁴ Women who wished to work as telephone operators for the *Postes Téléphones et Télégraphes* service after the war had to produce a certificate attesting to their good character, signed by the mayor or police commissioner of their home town. This requirement did not exist for men.¹⁰³⁵ In 1916 a directive from J

1031 *Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme*, 4 January, 1917.

1032 AN F/7/13360, Police Report, 28 November, 1917

1033 AN F/12/8008, Minutes of meeting of the Committee of Economic Action for the 11th Region, 11 January, 1918

1034 AN F/12/7999, December, 1915.

1035 Frader. "From Muscles to Nerves" p. 139

Thierry, an under secretary in the ministry of war, declared that in order to help unemployed women and other women deprived of a livelihood by the war, “les travaux de confections faciles (chemises, caleçons, etuis-musettes, etc.) ont été réservées aux associations charitables”.¹⁰³⁶ At a meeting of syndicalists in Toulouse in January 1918 there were complaints about the hiring of young women to work in the creche, in the belief that employment there should have been reserved for older women or mothers of families.¹⁰³⁷ During the war, the Hotchkiss factory in Lyon had employed 3000 workers, 800 of them women. Following the armistice the factory had fired 550 of the women, retaining 250 chosen on the basis that their family situation was “plus particulièrement digne à intérêt.” The link between women and the war wounded was also apparent here as the sacked women received an indemnity ranging from 180-300 francs. 1200 men were also fired, without indemnity, except for those wounded in the war. “Toutefois les ouvriers mutilés de guerre seront assimilés aux femmes.”¹⁰³⁸

The Popular Debate

Marie-Monique Huss has examined the postcards that were sent extensively throughout the war. She argues that while the press extolled the advances of women at work, their move into areas previously reserved for men, “et parfois même l’émergence d’une nouvelle image de la femme”; was not reflected in the representations in postcards, which remained traditional.¹⁰³⁹ Women were “représentées en train de prendre soin de leur famille et de faire tourner le pays, sans les hommes. Avec de titre comme L’autre Front, ou L’autre Devoir, ces cartes apportent leur contribution à la mobilisation féminine, contrepartie de celle des hommes.”¹⁰⁴⁰

There was also a notable difference between how working women were depicted. Those knitting or performing other traditional tasks were portrayed seriously, while

1036 AN F/12/7999, 30 August, 1916.

1037 AN F/7/12986/1, 19 January, 1918.

1038 AN F/7/13365, Police Report. 17 December, 1918.

1039 Huss, *Histoires de famille* p. 213.

1040 Huss, *Histoires de famille* p. 212.

illustrations of nurses were almost always respectful, and sometimes reverential.¹⁰⁴¹ By contrast, women working in the arms factories were treated irreverently, with the patronising diminutives *munitionette* or *obusette*, and they were the subjects of humorous or erotic images. This was unlike Britain, where women producing weapons were depicted as respected and valued contributors to the war effort.¹⁰⁴²

Advertisements overwhelmingly continued to portray women in traditional roles. Cartoons promoting Phoscao, a product supposed to ease stomach ailments, consistently depicted women as nurses or maids aiding or serving male soldiers throughout 1916.¹⁰⁴³ An advertisement for Globéol pills depicted a male physician offering a sickly woman some pills, indicating that they would give her the radiant health of a young woman picking flowers outside.¹⁰⁴⁴ Another depicted an elderly male farmer sowing a crop of the pills and achieving a harvest of healthy young women.¹⁰⁴⁵ When the makers of Tonitrine wanted to display its fortifying powers it depicted male miners, workers or soldiers; women were shown as nuns or nurses.¹⁰⁴⁶

The articles in newspapers also did not display a widespread acceptance of women's working practices changing. *La Bataille*, in an article on women working in a factory, argued that "Ces femmes font toutes sortes de travaux; la plupart de ces travaux ne sont pas en rapport avec la force féminine [...] qu'importe, il faut qu'elles les accomplissent tout de même." If they couldn't or wouldn't carry out these tasks, despite them not being suitable for women's strength, *La Bataille* argued they would be sacked.¹⁰⁴⁷ Godechot describes the reaction of the newspapers in the south:

Puis ce sont les P.T.T., l'enseignement, les banques, les journaux et la pouderie qui embauchent des femmes. Les journaux conservateurs, et mêmes *La Dépêche* s'en alarment. Seul *le Midi socialiste*

1041 Huss, *Histoires de famille* p. 212, pp. 215-216.

1042 Huss, *Histoires de famille* p. 208, p. 214, for examples see p. 207, p. 212, p. 215, p. 225.

1043 *L'Eclair du Midi*.

1044 *La Dépêche*, 10 February, 1916.

1045 *La Dépêche*, 24 February, 1916.

1046 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 6 April, 1916, 12 November, 1916, 13 April, 1916, 16 April, 1916, 10 September, 1916.

1047 *La Bataille*, 19 July, 1916.

approuve ces initiatives et s'élève contre les 'insinuations abominables et les injures infectes des journaux bourgeois'.¹⁰⁴⁸

This reaction was not at the start of the war, but in January 1917.

Godechot notes that by April 1918 *La Dépêche* had come round to accept "les droites politiques et sociaux [...] de la femme ne pourront plus être niés"¹⁰⁴⁹ Yet this seeming acceptance that women had proven themselves is a *non sequitur*. By working in various fields previously closed to them, women had not earned the right to carry on working in them; instead they had earned political and social rights. To *La Dépêche*, women had not proved themselves as capable workers in every area, but they had shown that they were prepared to suffer for the country, thus deserving political reward. The readers of *L'Ouest-Éclair* made a similar argument when the paper held a debate on female suffrage. Various people suggested that "Pour prix de ses peines, de ses souffrances et de ses larmes, la femme serait admise à élire les conseillers municipaux, [...] peut-être même les députés."¹⁰⁵⁰ The newspaper itself seemed to be taking that line when (in the context of whether women should be granted the vote) it recounted the contribution of women during the war.

mamans sublimes, vivant dans les pires angoisses, la plupart douloureusement frappées en plein cœur; femmes héroïques, cachant souvent à leur enfant, les larmes que causa la mort du père; ou, tout simplement, cultivatrices laborieuses dirigeant, seules, la ferme pendant que le mari se bat; ouvrières courageuses faisant [...] 'deux journées dans une' afin de nourrir la petite famille; jeunes filles, oubliant les distractions permises à des cerveaux de vingt ans, pour se consacrer à une tâche aride, modeste et sans gloire, qui permet à la maman de grossir les recettes du maigre budget familial..."¹⁰⁵¹

Once again this shows the assumption that those who had suffered during the war should be favoured over those seen to have exploited it. That the same criterion was applied to foreign labour is illustrated by the response of the director of the Atelier de

1048 J. Godechot, "L'Essor? (1914-1973)" in Phillippe Wolff (ed.) *Histoire de Toulouse*, Toulouse: Privat (1974) p. 499.

1049 Godechot, "L'Essor?" p. 499.

1050 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 8 February, 1918. Notice that the reward is for women's suffering and tears, in other words, for being feminine.

1051 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 8 February, 1918.

Fabrication in Toulouse to a complaint about foreign workers from a delegation of about 150 women workers, led by M. Valette. He argued

qu'il allait prendre des dispositions pour congédier, dès qu'il le pourra, les sujets portugais, espagnols ou des autres nations; pour les Annamites et les Malgaches, il demandera qu'ils soient rendus disponibles quand les nécessités du service le permettront. Quant aux Serbes et aux Belges qui sont des éprouvés de la guerre, il a déclaré ne pouvoir y toucher.¹⁰⁵²

Particularly in jobs involving the taking of responsibility it was often felt that women were overstretching themselves. Gustave Lanson, the most respected literary scholar of the time, believed that the taking over of *lycée* teaching by women and elderly men had led to a significant decline in the quality of secondary teaching, making it necessary for the Sorbonne to bring in introductory courses.¹⁰⁵³ According to Henri Spont, the women who had become the first lawyers and doctors were admired because they “avait eu le courage de renoncer aux amusements frivoles de son sexe pour plonger ses jolis yeux dans de vieux grimoire et qui préférait à la poudre la poussière des bibliothèques.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Nevertheless, their true goal was to get married. He added that while some exceptional women might succeed in professional roles, many others would fail to match their unrealistic ambitions.

Pour quelques virtuoses qui, douées d'une intelligence virile et exemptes de préjugés, pouvaient, au prix d'efforts et de concessions pénibles, réussir à s'imposer dans un monde où les bonnes places sont occupées par les hommes, combien d'autres, victimes de leur illusions, succomberont sur la route trop longue, trop dure.¹⁰⁵⁵

Even those female virtuosos blessed with an intelligence that was “virile”, and hence presumably similar to male intelligence, could only succeed at great personal cost. In an extreme example of women failing to cope with the situation, Yves Pourcher has described the case of a female baker named Ryom in the maison de santé des Capucins. “C'est une malheureuse femme qui se trouvant seule à la tête de son commerce depuis le départ de son mari pour Salonique a perdu complètement la raison. Elle s'arrache les cheveux et s'accuse d'avoir tué tous ses enfants.” In this

1052 AN F/7/12986/1, 5th February, 1918.

1053 Hanna, “French Women and American Men” p. 109.

1054 Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, p. 66.

report it seems to be implied that being left in charge, rather than her husband's departure to the front, was the cause of her insanity.¹⁰⁵⁶

On a rare occasion, an advert (for Pilules Pink) showed women undertaking strenuous labour, bringing in the harvest. The text warned "Puisque les nobles travaux de la terre incombent aujourd'hui aux femmes [...] il importe de les mettre en garde contre les conséquences d'un effort admirable, mais parfois excessif."¹⁰⁵⁷ Still more daringly, in October 1917 it featured a woman making shells. The actual work of the woman was not obviously masculine; she was simply turning a wheel of a machine. It was feared that even this placed undue demands upon a woman, and that "[l]e courage ne peut indéfiniment suppléer les forces défaillantes," thus it was necessary for women to take extra care of their health.¹⁰⁵⁸ Similarly, another restorative product, Tontrine, was offered to a woman to try and revive her from exhaustion, brought about by having to look after her farm.¹⁰⁵⁹ This message is illustrative of a wide-ranging discourse that argued women were risking their health through the extra or new tasks they were undertaking. On the political left, the *Bataille* and the *Vague* both regularly criticised the working conditions that tested women to the limits of their capacities. On the right, Mme. Debrol lauded the work women were doing while the husbands were at the front but noted "Et c'est quelquefois dur! les aiguillages, les bousculades du Dimanche, les perpétuelles trépidations! Mais elles sont heureuses de remplir leur place et de faire leur tâche."¹⁰⁶⁰ J. B. Massé, owner of an insurance company commented that many women whose husbands and sons had been mobilised were forced to take work to support their families and that this work was "plus ou moins nuisibles à leur santé".¹⁰⁶¹

Loisel and Klotz's study of the British war factories led them to comment on how it had been recognised there that women could not manage to work at exactly the same

1055 Spont, *La Femme et la Guerre*, p. 72.

1056 Pourcher, *La Vie des Français*, p. 280.

1057 *La Dépêche*, 20 July, 1917.

1058 *La Dépêche*, 3 October, 1917.

1059 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 20 April, 1916.

1060 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 7 July, 1915.

1061 Massé, *Notice des assurances sur la vie* p. 4.

rate as men. They argued that it was the general rule in England that “la journée de travail est plus chargée pour l’ouvrier que pour l’ouvrière”.¹⁰⁶² Moreover

Pour les femmes, il semble bien reconnu, par l’ensemble des industriels anglais, que l’ouvrière, tout en pouvant dépenser la même somme d’énergie que l’homme, a cependant plus besoin que lui de pauses au cours de son temps de travail.¹⁰⁶³

Women’s ability or inability to undertake arduous physical work was regularly linked with their reproductive role. Amar’s book on the physiological organisation of work cautioned

On doit écarter des travaux durs les enfants qui n’ont pas atteint *dix-huit ans*, et les *femmes*, car ils manquent de la force nécessaire, vu leur maigre musculature. Ces dernières sont affaiblies par les *menstruations* [...] et la *grossesse*;¹⁰⁶⁴

In the first meeting of a parliamentary committee on female work, in May 1916, the chair Paul Strauss, argued that simply recruiting women was not enough, it was also necessary to ensure that they were employed in a way that best corresponded to their aptitudes, their interests and their physical and moral health, in order to safeguard the race and to prepare for the future.¹⁰⁶⁵

While lauding the majority of the brave women workers who offered their devotion to the defence of France, Paul Vernédal’s medical thesis on the impact of the war on children in Toulouse concluded that factory work was bad for pregnant women”.¹⁰⁶⁶

An article by *L’Echo de Midi* on the problem of the workforce provides a good illustration of the impression that women workers were making on male observers. It began positively, “Cet emploi de la main d’œuvre féminine n’a rencontré aucune opposition, et le nombre de femmes employées dans les usines de guerre, déjà très considérable, va croissant tous les jours.” This was not the whole story, however.

1062 Gustave Loisel and Klotz, *Les Ouvriers & Ouvrières des Usines de Guerre en Angleterre*, Paris: Citroën (1917) p. 60.

1063 Loisel and Klotz, *Les Ouvriers & Ouvrières*, p. 61.

1064 Amar, *Organisation Physiologique du Travail*, p. 119.

1065 Comité du travail féminin, *Protection et utilisation de la main d’œuvre féminine*, p. 68.

1066 Vernédal, *L’Enfant de la Guerre à Toulouse*, p. 36, pp. 36-44.

Mais les femmes, quelle que soit la bonne volonté, ne sont pas capables de suffire à tous les travaux. Leur résistance physique a des limites, aussi bien que celle de ces auxiliaires écartés du service armé en raison justement de leur mauvaise santé ou de leur faiblesse de constitution.

This physical weakness was considered so pronounced that the paper argued that not just male colonial labour - Annamites, Kabyles, and Moroccans - should be utilised instead but those men too old to have been already mobilised were preferable as they were “plus robustes, malgré leur âge”.¹⁰⁶⁷

The post-war abandonment of much of their wartime employment by women seems to have been taken as a given by many contemporaries. A report summarising the work of the various committees and sub-committees of economic action illustrated that women were not expected to remain in the workforce when it argued that while the situation of “intérimaires” deserved attention, the majority of these workers were women or the elderly who would, when peace arrived, abandon the factory to return to their husbands and children; or else they were refugees. As for those who had died in the war, or had become too seriously wounded to undertake their pre-war occupation, “la question des intérimaires se posera sans acuité. Elle sera d’autant moins à redouter que la main-d’oeuvre étrangère aura été plus réglementée.”¹⁰⁶⁸ *Le Soir* reported in 1918 the complaints of the deputy, M. Durafour, about an arsenal that had fired a third of its male personnel. Durafour appeared to have little interest in the firing of women.¹⁰⁶⁹ In July 1917, there was an inter-ministerial conference on the employment issue, debating what would happen when peace arrived. M. Grunebaum-Ballin, President of the Commission du placement des marins et de la main d’œuvre maritime, was the principal speaker. He argued that the closing of the munitions factories and the desire of demobilised troops to return to their previous occupations would deprive a certain number of women their jobs. However, he believed that the majority of spouses and mothers would be happy to return to their domestic tasks and the joys of home, and to quit work that was often laborious.¹⁰⁷⁰ He also quoted M. Fuster, professor of the College of France: “Une masse de ces ouvriers d’aujourd’hui,

1067 *L’Eclair du Midi*, 24 April, 1916.

1068 AN F/12/8001, The report is undated, but seems most likely to have been made in 1916.

1069 *Le Soir*, 25 April, 1918.

femmes, jeunes gens, vieillards, moins valides, aura été rejetée de l'usine." Many of them were working only because of the departure of a mobilised soldier, but some of them needed employment. Fuster wondered if these people would compete with returning troops for jobs, but his conclusion as to who would be best suited to the job was clear.¹⁰⁷¹

For the unionists, the situation was similar. Jouhaux argued that, "Nous ne pouvons pas à l'heure actuelle, nous opposer à l'emploi de la main d'œuvre féminine."¹⁰⁷² Again women's work is seen as only a stopgap. Luquet, a national CGT leader, made a revealing comment early in 1916 when he said

After the war, when our own have laid down arms and can once again take up their tools, the women who occupied their posts in the hell of industry will relinquish their places to their male companions. Will it be the same if ... female labour is replaced by Asian or African labor?¹⁰⁷³

This obviously shows that, after the war, women were expected to leave the occupations they had just filled, so much so that it could be taken as a given. Interestingly, it also indicates that employers were considering immigrant labour as a replacement for women during the war, which again questions whether women were really thought to be capable of some of the necessary tasks, even for a short period of time. In June 1917 a police report made a similar point, referring to "women, temporarily transformed into wartime workers".¹⁰⁷⁴ In a report for the sub-committee of economic action in the Cher, M. Amichau, argued that to prevent men and women competing against each other for jobs after the war it was necessary to employ the principle of equal pay for equal work – which he believed would ensure that industrialists would choose to employ men.¹⁰⁷⁵

It must also be stressed that there was no attempt to recruit colonial women. While the most important factor in this was probably a desire to stop immigrants getting too

1070 AN F/12/8001, July, 1917.

1071 AN F/12/8001, July, 1917.

1072 *La Bataille*, 28 January, 1916.

1073 Horne, "Immigrant Workers in France" p. 84.

1074 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, p. 146.

1075 AN F/12/8004, Sub-committee of economic action report, department of Cher, 29 March, 1916.

settled, it did create a much higher possibility of sexual relations between immigrants and French women, which, as discussed elsewhere, was seen as a problem. That this was considered a price worth paying tends to imply that a low value was placed on the labour of colonial women. When immigrants did bring their wives, they often took on traditional roles. An article in *Le Matin* on 18 August 1916 lauds Greeks working in Bourgogne as perfect workers, and is entirely positive. The women and children who had accompanied them were portrayed laughing and chatting as they undertook their domestic work.¹⁰⁷⁶

Agriculture

In the agricultural sector, the problem of a lack of manpower had been one that caused great concern even before the war. The loss of huge numbers of men to the front, and the high casualties suffered there only exacerbated this situation. The peasantry were significantly over-represented amongst the infantry, and thus sustained proportionately more casualties than most other sections of society. The response to the shortage of men entailed the hiring of considerable numbers of foreign labour, particularly Portuguese and Spanish, and a much greater role for women. In more than a third of farms, a woman was left at the head of operations. Of course, women working in agriculture was nothing new, but in the farms where a woman did take over the management of the farm they also took over certain tasks previously restricted to men – for instance ploughing and the selling of produce.¹⁰⁷⁷

In agriculture there was a consistent message; women had worked heroically to replace men, but had not proved to be entirely adequate. A report on agriculture in the Tours region despaired that since the departure of the last class there were no more people in the countryside and that the old and the young who remained were absolutely insufficient to carry out the intensive farming that was needed in the region. The agricultural workers who remained were mediocre workers, with a feeble output. Not only this, but they made excessive salary demands.¹⁰⁷⁸ In a debate in the

¹⁰⁷⁶ Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines", p. 747. *Le Matin*, 18 August, 1916.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Annie Moulin, *Les paysans dans la société française de la Révolution à nos jours*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil (1988) p. 171.

¹⁰⁷⁸ AN F/12/8003, Undated, probably from Spring, 1916.

chamber on how to avoid land being abandoned, Fernand David claimed “les femmes seront incapables d’expliquer pourquoi leur terre n’est pas cultivée.”¹⁰⁷⁹ *L’Ouest-Éclair* argued that

dans la plupart des fermes, ce sont des femmes qui exécutent, en partie, le travail que faisaient précédemment les hommes. L’état général des fermes en souffre et le rendement s’en trouve fortement diminué.¹⁰⁸⁰

A report on agriculture and mechanisation, by the agronomist Jacques Lesuer, for the Ministry of Agriculture in the winter of 1915-1916 lauded the marvellous patriotism of the French in ensuring that the agricultural situation in 1914-1915 wasn’t as bad as had been feared. He praised everyone for making a marvellous effort, the elderly, women, children and non-mobilised men. Unfortunately he thought it improbable that such an effort could be repeated.¹⁰⁸¹ Later, the author lauded American machines simple enough that the children and wives of the soldiers could “conserver au sol sa richesse en attendant que les jeunes générations nous donnent de nouveaux hommes qui rendront à l’agriculture les bras que la guerre lui aura fait perdre.”¹⁰⁸²

In the Indre-et-Loire it was noted that in 1914 women had bravely managed to fill the breach. However, it had been due to an incredible effort and in 1915 the courage of these farmers was beginning to weaken and many of them were overburdened by work beyond their strength.¹⁰⁸³ Nearby, in the Maine-et-Loire, at the beginning of 1916, a report made a distinction between farms where a man remained “pour assurer l’utilisation des attelages aux labours, hersages, roulages et transports de toute sorte” and farm where only a woman remained. In the former, 15 day agricultural leaves would suffice, but in those farms of over 15 hectares where a woman was on her own the continual presence of a good worker, able to drive a plough was indispensable.¹⁰⁸⁴ In February 1916, the Deux-Sèvres made a similar distinction. The region had been

1079 *La Petite Gironde*, 7 April, 1916.

1080 *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 24 April, 1917.

1081 AN F/10/2185, November 1915 - February, 1916.

1082 AN F/10/2185, November 1915 - February, 1916.

1083 AN F/12/8003, undated, probably January, 1916.

1084 AN F/12/8003, undated, probably January, 1916.

understaffed even before the war, and things were now critical. On small farms, women and the aged could just about cope.

Quand l'exploitation n'a que 10 à 15 hectares, le travail se fait mal, mais il se fait encore, grâce au courage de la femme et du vieillard, courage et vaillance qui n'ont d'égal que le dévouement de nos soldats.

But even to do the work badly was requiring an overwhelming effort, and it was feared that being forced to maintain this effort would exhaust those who remained. As to alternative sources of labour, Belgians, Italians and Poles weren't available, Spanish and Kabyles were unsatisfactory, as were Belgian refugees. The committee recommended utilising German prisoners, despite some misgivings.¹⁰⁸⁵

By 1917 another report for the Ministry of Agriculture reported a critical situation.

Pour donner de l'impulsion aux travaux des champs, il faut des hommes. C'est un des gros facteurs de vivification, c'est celui qui touche le plus près à l'autorité militaire [...] La culture manque de bras malgré tous les efforts faites jusqu'à ce jour dans le but d'employer des travailleurs coloniaux, des étrangers, des prisonniers de guerre. [...] Des ouvriers américains pourraient aussi venir dans nos usines de guerre, libérer des soldats qui remplaceraient au front autant de terriens, mais ceci c'est hypothétique et le temps presse.¹⁰⁸⁶

While many of these reports may attest primarily to a situation where the work was too much for the few people left on the farms to undertake, regardless of their sex, other reports highlight specifically doubts over women's ability to manage. The President of the syndicat agricole d'Yvrac wrote a letter describing how the lack of winegrowers had forced the owners of vineyards to "utiliser tant bien que mal, pour le taille de la vigne, tous les hommes et les jeunes gens, quelque fois même des femmes" and as a result the work was not done.¹⁰⁸⁷

A report presented to the Comité d'action nationale drew attention to the vulnerability of women trying to run farms on their own.

1085 AN F/12/8004, Sub-committee of economic action report, 13 February, 1916.

1086 AN F/10/2185, 15 May, 1917. Emphasis in the original.

1087 AN F/12/8011, 4 November, 1916

Voyez-vous ces malheureuses femmes, restées seules dans les fermes, la plupart isolées, des vieillards dans la même situation, auxquels on propose comme main d'œuvre des vagabonds et des traîneurs! Mais ces femmes, et avec raison, préfèrent abandonner le ferme plutôt que d'y introduire de tels éléments et elles ont raison. [...] Le retour, la présence du mari, de l'homme; il en impose forcément, il peut embaucher des ouvriers, des ouvrières, que sa femme n'osait pas venir. [...] Jamais on ne dira assez le courage, l'héroïsme même qu'ont montré grand nombre de femmes restées à la tête d'exploitations agricoles.¹⁰⁸⁸

This is by no means a hostile report, indeed it describes as heroic those women who remain in charge of farms, but it does argue that women aren't capable of doing the hiring and firing of agricultural labourers that might be necessary for the running of the farm. Not only were they too fearful to sack agricultural workers, but the report also described that they lived in fear of the anger and fury of those workers when they were drunk.¹⁰⁸⁹

The sub-committee of economic action in the Loir-et-Cher complained about the lack of quantity, and sometimes lack of quality in its workforce. A certain number of courageous wives had taken the place of their husbands. "Mais la plupart d'entre elles s'occupent des autres travaux qui leur sont habituellement réservés. Ce personnel, assez médiocre dans la plupart des cas et toujours en nombre insuffisant, ne peut exécuter qu'une faible partie des travaux les plus nécessaires."¹⁰⁹⁰ Similarly a report on agriculture in the Dordogne reported that the work carried out by women, the elderly, or by children was generally badly done; ploughing was superficial, the weeding insufficient, *anticryptogamique* treatments too slow, the harvests sometimes compromised.¹⁰⁹¹ Women were also under the vigilant surveillance of other members of their family, or even husbands at the front.¹⁰⁹²

M. Lefebvre du Prey opposed granting women the vote on the grounds that though they had rendered immense service to agriculture they could not replace men, while in

1088 AN F/12/8025, 15 January, 1917.

1089 AN F/12/8025, 15 January, 1917.

1090 AN F/12/8003, 8 January, 1916.

1091 AN F/12/8003, Sub-committee of economic action report, department of Dordogne, 12 January, 1916.

1092 Moulin, *Les paysans dans la société française*, p. 171.

the factories they needed to be helped by soldiers sent back from the front.¹⁰⁹³ In 1919 the *Petite Gironde* concluded

Les femmes, les enfants, les vieillards, avec un courage et une ardeur qui ont fait l'admiration de tous, ont multiplié leur efforts [...] mais les forces humaines ont des limites qui arrêtent les meilleures volontés; la nature a des droits et des exigences qu'il faut satisfaire.¹⁰⁹⁴

A directive from the Prefect of the Aude in January 1917 to the mayors and teachers of the department called for...

Les heures consacrées à l'enseignement agricole, ainsi qu'aux exercices physiques seront obligatoirement employées à partir de 15 Février à la mise en valeur des terres destinées à la production des cultures les plus simples: pommes de terre, haricots, pois, carottes, choux, salsifis.¹⁰⁹⁵

However, the schools for girls were to concentrate on the raising of "lapins, poules, pintades, canards, oies, dindons, L'élevage des porcs devre être développé dans les établissements pourvus d'un internat."¹⁰⁹⁶ The *Bataille* praised a similar scheme undertaken by the prefect of Saône-et-Loire.¹⁰⁹⁷ Once again it is noticeable that the role assigned to women focuses on their presumed natural instinct for nurture.

A poster in *La Main d'Œuvre agricole* from June 1917 depicted men before they departed to the front and the women who were replacing them. However, the difference in tasks undertaken by the two sexes was stark. The men were featured sharpening a scythe and forging a sword on an anvil respectively. By contrast, one woman was shown picking grapes by hand while the other was using a machine to make a shell.¹⁰⁹⁸ In agriculture, as in industry, men are seen as skilled craftsmen with the capacity for undertaking heavy manual labour, while women are seen as deft, nimble workers, whose skilful hands can be utilised to compensate for their fragile arms. Overall the war also made little impact on broader trends towards the

1093 *La Petite Gironde*, 16 May, 1919.

1094 *La Petite Gironde*, 2 January, 1919.

1095 AN F/12/8025, 29 January, 1917. Emphasis in the original.

1096 AN F/12/8025, 29 January, 1917.

1097 *La Bataille*, 24 February, 1917.

1098 Gervereau and Prochasson, *Images de 1917*, p. 68.

domination of agriculture by medium-sized family farms or towards rural depopulation caused by low natality and migration towards the towns.¹⁰⁹⁹

Working-class attitudes

For the working-class leadership, women's work in factories was seen as acceptable as long as they were spared the worst excesses of industrial labour. Working class organisations regularly urged the need to protect women in the factories. In 1918, the syndicat de la métallurgie wanted to "protéger la femme dans nos usines."¹¹⁰⁰ Writing about striking women in munitions factories in *La Bataille*, Jouhaux argued that they accepted women's labour only as long as employers took account of the "forces limitées" of women, as well as offering equal pay for equal work.¹¹⁰¹ Jouhaux also shared the concern that factory work should not prevent women from fulfilling their social role – that of giving birth.. He complained about the attitude of recalcitrant employers, asking rhetorically "Ne doit-on pas voir dans la femme la mère de famille indispensable à la continuité de la nation?"¹¹⁰²

The general tone of comments from men in the labour movement did suggest that they didn't believe that women were getting enough protection in industry. Merrheim argued that women had "over-extended" themselves in the factories during the war and needed to be returned to the home. Bardy, the Secretary of the Union des Syndicats de la Gironde said that women in the factories were ruining both their physical and moral health. In November 1917, one of the demands by the Syndicat de la Voiture was of an increase in the length of rest periods for women.¹¹⁰³

The Syndicat des Ouvriers et Ouvrières en Métaux de la Seine called for the English week, with Saturdays off, claiming that it would bring about an incontestable improvement in the lives of working women. Firstly because it would allow them to get down to caring for their "neglected" home, secondly for the joy of spending time

1099 Moulin, *Les paysans dans la société française* pp. 179-181.

1100 AN F/12/8024, 14 April, 1918.

1101 *La Bataille*, 10 January, 1917.

1102 *La Bataille*, 28 January, 1916, 10 January, 1917.

1103 AN F/7/13361 Police Reports from the Loire-Inférieure, 31 August, 1918; AN F/7/13360, Police

with the children, and finally to allow them to prepare for the rest they'd earned by a hard week's work.¹¹⁰⁴

In February 1916, Lyon municipal council adopted the measure of equal pay for equal work for all women who replaced male workers and performed the same task as they had. Jouhaux argued in favour of the measure--it would allow women more rest, essential since their delicate bodies could not work as hard as men without adversely affecting their ability to have children.¹¹⁰⁵ As well as a genuine concern for women and their ability to work and be homemakers, the concern over women earning equal salaries was founded on a desire not to allow women to undercut male wages and working conditions. This was made explicit by Lecussan, a union activist in the Haute-Garonne, speaking to the co-operative "L'Union des Travailleurs" in Toulouse. According to police reports he addressed sharp criticism to women who had accepted work previously confined to men, without ensuring they got the same rate of pay.¹¹⁰⁶ For the same reason, when the Congrès de l'Association Nationale d'Expansion économique advised of the necessity of hiring some foreign labour, they recommended that, to allay fears of French workers, these immigrant workers would be paid the same as other workers in the locality with the same tasks and aptitudes.¹¹⁰⁷ Another report described a syndicalist meeting, in which Valette criticised women workers for putting too much effort into their work. This resulted in the production of too many bullets.¹¹⁰⁸

In March 1918, the union of the Poudrerie in Toulouse had a meeting of about 600 people, both male and female. It declared that women should be paid equally to men on the basis that they were now carrying out all the work previously done by men and that the war had placed them in the position of men as head of the family. This represented the first time that equal wages had been demanded by the union; in all previous demands women had been offered roughly two-thirds of men's pay.¹¹⁰⁹ This

Report, 8 March, 1917; AN F/7/13365 16 November, 1917

1104 AN F/7/13365, 14 June, 1917

1105 *La Bataille*, 13 February, 1916.

1106 AN F/7/12986/1, 29 April, 1918.

1107 AN F/12/8001, June, 1917.

1108 AN F/7/12986/1, 8 July, 1918.

1109 AN F/7/12986/1, 4 March, 1918.

did not mean that women had proved their full equality with men though. In August, the union continued to demand that women employed in “men’s work” received the same salary, but simultaneously demanded the cessation of women’s work in certain jobs which they lacked “la force et l’énergie” to perform. It is interesting that the union was arguing that women were already doing jobs beyond their abilities, or at least ones that male workers wanted for themselves.¹¹¹⁰

In 1918 the Salaire de base unique was also accepted by the union of the Atelier de Fabrication in Toulouse, “sur le principe que les femmes dont les besoins sont identiques à l’homme, bénéficient du même salaires lorsqu’elles font le même travail...”. It is noticeable that this demand is based on women’s needs being identical to men’s, rather than claiming that their value was of equal worth. At the same meeting they were calling for a pension of 1200 francs for men, compared to just 1000 for women.¹¹¹¹

For the working classes the questions of female and foreign labour were often addressed together. In March 1917, a speech by Jouhaux to the workers at Le Creusot was reported to the prefect of the Saône-et-Loire. Jouhaux argued that women workers should be supported in the factories, and should be helped to earn an equal wage to make them “une associé et non une rivale.” As for the foreign workforce, he believed that they should continue to be employed under the same conditions as before the war, and that foreign militants should not be deported.¹¹¹²

The official line of working-class organisations was that they were not opposed to foreign workers, on the condition that their entry into the marketplace did not serve to replace French workers, reduce salaries, or harm working conditions.¹¹¹³ Merrheim visited Lyon to speak to unionists there, claiming he was trying to avoid “une certaine effervescence” against the Italian soldiers working there and to not to create any animosity between workers who didn’t happen to be of the same nationality.¹¹¹⁴

1110 AN F/7/12986/1, 18 August, 1918.

1111 AN F/7/12986/1, 11 March, 1918.

1112 AN F/7/13365, 11 March, 1917.

1113 *La Bataille*, 6 August, 1916.

1114 AN F/7/13365, 13 January, 1918.

However, it was very rare that the presence of foreign workers wasn't seen as damaging to the interests of the French labour movement. Jouhaux claimed that employers sometimes introduced foreign labour to prevent increases in salaries and argued that "[l]a guerre n'a pas aboli complètement ces pratiques condamnables."¹¹¹⁵ The syndicat of the Atelier de Fabrication had a meeting in March 1918 in which they urged the government "de procéder d'abord au renvoi de la main d'œuvre étrangère avant d'opérer le moindre prélèvement sur la main d'œuvre française."¹¹¹⁶

Fears of the use of foreign workers as a tool to lower wages or to counter indigenous labour militancy were often well founded. In March 1918 a Bordeaux port administrator requested 100 colonial workers, explicitly stating that it was to bring down wages in the local labor force.¹¹¹⁷ Furthermore, colonial workers were much more likely to be used as strike-breakers, due to their isolation from Trade Unions, an inability to seek work elsewhere, and harsher repercussions if they did strike, plus several other contributory factors.¹¹¹⁸

When male workers were faced by the twin challenges of female and foreign labour, then they generally supported the women. An assembly of syndicalists in Toulouse expressed its approval over a guarantee that the female workforce would not be replaced by colonial workers.

L'Assemblée se montre satisfaite des paroles prononcées à la Tribune de la Chambre par le Ministre de l'Armement qui a déclaré que la main d'œuvre féminine devait être maintenue et en aucun cas remplacée par une autre main d'œuvre telle qu'annamite, malgache, etc., et a en outre pris l'engagement formel de ne remplacer aucun ouvrier français par des ouvriers ou soldats des armées alliées.¹¹¹⁹

This statement is interesting for two reasons. Firstly because it argues against the replacement of any French worker by a foreigner, be they Indochinese, Malagasy or from an allied nation. More importantly though it equates the labour of men from

¹¹¹⁵ *La Bataille*, 22 September, 1916.

¹¹¹⁶ AN F/7/12986/1, 11 March, 1918.

¹¹¹⁷ Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines", p. 746.

¹¹¹⁸ Stovall, "The Color Line Behind The Lines", pp. 762-3.

¹¹¹⁹ AN F/7/12986/1, 5 February, 1918.

allied nations as comparable to that of French men, while that of colonial workers is comparable to that of French women.

September 1918, in Nantes, Merrheim declared that the working classes had to organise in order to achieve the same salaries and bonuses for women as men and also to allow them to categorically refuse the competition of the foreign workforce. The police noted that this point was very loudly applauded by the sizeable audience of 1100 people, including 350 women.¹¹²⁰ It is notable that Merrheim's comments here are rather different from the speech he made in Lyon, and it may be that he was changing his argument in order to appeal to a greater hostility to immigrant workers in the North West.

When French workers, male or female, felt they were being treated unfairly because of foreign workers, then hostility towards foreigners became more explicit. At a meeting of syndicalists in Toulouse in January 1918 it was declared that

Il fait aussi connaître que s'il est question de chômage c'est dû à l'emploi de la main d'œuvre coloniale. Il n'admet pas que des "nègres" viennent prendre la place des femmes de mobilisés qui ont besoin de gagner leur vie. Il cite qu'à l'atelier de réfection des douilles du Polygone les Malgaches sont employés à des travaux d'emballage de douilles, alors que des femmes sont employés à des travaux pénibles. Le syndicat protestera contre l'emploi de cette main d'œuvre dans les ateliers.¹¹²¹

This statement is revealing for the universalising concept of non-whites as "nègres" as well as the argument that women should not be employed to do arduous work.

On 4 February there was another meeting of the syndicalists, who were again complaining about foreign workers, in particular the Portuguese on this occasion. It was pointed out that foreign workers led to the "relève des ouvriers mobilisés." The syndicalist delegate, Valette, responded that it was a point he often brought up with the management. He asserted that the union cannot tolerate unemployment or redundancies as long as there are foreigners in the establishment. This was

1120 AN F/7/13361 Police Reports from the Loire-Inférieure, 1 September, 1918

1121 AN F/7/12986/1, 19 January, 1918.

unanimously approved.¹¹²² The accusation that foreign workers were allowing French soldiers to go to the front was also levelled against Algerians in Lyon.¹¹²³ In Rennes, under the slogan “Rendez nous nos poilus”, female workers at an atelier de construction went on strike demanding wage increases and the sending back of the foreign and colonial workforce.¹¹²⁴ Discussing the complaints of dockers in Le Havre and Dunkerque at their unemployment due to usage of prisoners, Belgians and Moroccans, a M. Perrette talked of brawls between the Moroccans and the local population.¹¹²⁵

In *La Bataille*, the “Mouvement Social” section described a variety of disputes over wages and work hours throughout the war. It featured a letter from unionised bakers in Narbonne to their bosses

Voilà quelque temps que notre situation devient inquiète de fait que, sans nullement vous émouvoir, vous nous mettez sur le pavé pour nous remplacer par des ouvriers étrangers.

A un moment, vous dûtes, par suite du manque de main d’œuvre, faire appel à leur concours: mais là n’est pas notre grief puisqu’ils étaient nécessaires.

Mais ce qui est inadmissible aujourd’hui c’est que vous nous éliminez pour le conserver; seraient-ils plus habiles? Nous ne pouvons le croire, vous les auriez appelés bien avant. Souvenez-vous un instant qu’ils n’ont pas toujours été là, que nous, qui sommes du pays, avons besoin de manger et qu’en nous donnant du travail, vous faites vivre des Français.

Nous voulons bien, de compagnie avec les étrangers, faire notre ouvrage, à condition toutefois qu’il y en ait pour nous d’abord, surtout en ce moment, où la vie est si dure.¹¹²⁶

This letter makes clear that acceptance of foreign labour, such as there was, was contingent on it being considered unavoidable. However, it was totally unacceptable to employ it at the expense of French workers. The letter also appeals to national solidarity, as well as asserting the superiority of French workers.

1122 AN F/7/12986/1, 4 February, 1918.

1123 Massard-Guilbaud, *Des Algériens à Lyon*, p. 48.

1124 Meynier, *L’Algérie Révélée*, p. 469.

1125 AN F/14/11333 Minutes of the Conference Interministerielle de la Main d’Œuvre, 23 June, 1917

1126 reprinted in *La Bataille*, 2 January, 1916.

In June 1917 the police reported on a meeting of Ouvrières in the Poudrerie in Toulouse, where relations between the French workforce and the Annamite one were frosty.

Une autre s'éleva contre le projet de mettre les femmes à la nitration et dit qu'il faudra refuser d'y aller; Eh bien! on y mettra les Annamites, s'écrie une femme. [...] Si on met les annamites à la nitration" s'écria un ouvrier qui faisait partie du bureau, nous, bien que nous soyons militaires et n'ayons rien à dire, nous savons ce que nous avons à faire. Je ne le dis pas et pour cause, mais je suppose que vous devez me comprendre. [...] L'assemblée proteste contre la présence des annamites surtout lorsque un autre ouvrier lança cette phrase: "souvenez-vous qu'à Paris, pour les dernières grèves, les annamites étaient aux mitrailleuses!"¹¹²⁷

A few days later the police reported that the workers did eventually take direct action over the issue. As with many worker's demonstrations when men did not play the leading role, it was described in dismissive terms by the police, who noted that most of the leading demonstrators were "young kids of 14 and 15 and women, "ouvrières de mœurs légères" working at the Poudrerie."¹¹²⁸ Again, female immorality is considered to be inextricably linked with a failure to fulfill their wartime role. In a dispute over the employment of Indochinese in the Puy-de-Dôme, at a time when there were French workers unemployed, the dispute became framed in explicitly racial terms. Unionists, led by a M. Claussat complained about the inequity of the situation, but their complaints were rebuffed by the Prefect. Claussat responded "vous vous mettez à la tête des jaunes si vous le voulez, moi je me mettrai à la tête des blancs."¹¹²⁹

According to Police reports on the unions in Nantes, the main issues in the summer of 1918 were wages and demands for peace. In a rare discussion on the issues of women and foreigners, it was argued that women should not have to work more than 8 hours or at night, as it led to the abandonment of their children and domestic disharmony. In the likely event that the end of the war would lead to a surplus of foreigners, it was

1127 AN F/7/12986/1, 9 June, 1917.

1128 AN F/7/12986/1, 14 June, 1917.

1129 AN F/7/13365 Report presented to the Ministry of the Interior, 18 January, 1916

declared they should never be employed ahead of the French.¹¹³⁰ These views were replicated around the country.

Foreign and Female Workers in Economic Debates

One issue that demonstrates the consistency of attitudes over both gender and race is the debate over post-war immigration. As was seen earlier, issues of depopulation and race were strongly linked, and this was also crucial to understanding which nationalities were encouraged to immigrate to France and which were not.

For an industrialist and modernist like Camille Cavallier the economic situation was poor even before the war, as he lamented that an insufficient workforce, enfeebled by alcoholism, syphilis, slum housing and tuberculosis had hindered industrial expansion and the introduction of “travailleurs étrangers inexpérimentés et d’humeur vagabonde” had made little difference. After the armistice these problems were aggravated by the casualties of the war. Cavallier focused on three types of changes needed to provide France with the workforce she needed. Temporary changes included employing women and foreigners, as well as the re-education of the war wounded. Permanent measures were technocratic – promoting taylorism, mechanisation, standardisation and so on. It was also essential to struggle against alcoholism, syphilis, tuberculosis and malthusianism.¹¹³¹ For Cavallier, the reason that women could only be a temporary solution was that he didn’t think they would be able to produce the children France needed and “travailler efficacement à l’usine.”¹¹³² Immigration was necessary as a temporary expedient, but “[i]l faudra aller à l’étranger chercher une main d’œuvre qui exigera, pour s’adapter, beaucoup de précautions et des essais persévérants et attentifs.” Cavallier set out the order in which he believed foreign workers should be recruited. First should be those from neighbouring countries, then from other European countries, particularly with high birth rates. After that they should utilise countries overseas having European civilisations before,

1130 AN F/7/13361 Police Reports from the Loire-Inférieure, 2 June, 1918; 5 August, 1918

1131 Cavallier, *L’Avenir de la France*, p. 18.

1132 C. Cavallier, *Après Guerre; La Métallurgie Française, Des améliorations, évolutions et réformes qui seraient nécessaires dans ses méthodes, ses moyens, son esprit*. Paris: Chaix (1917) p. 25

finally, searching in exotic nations, aiming to avoid as much as possible a melange of races and civilisations.¹¹³³

The need for immigration was widely accepted, both to maintain France's population levels, stricken by the vast number of war dead, and also to rebuild the French economy. It was hardly welcomed; most people hoped it would be only an interim measure, and French response to domestic unemployment and xenophobic popular sentiment in 1919 and 1921 was to close the borders, reopening them as soon as the crisis had passed.¹¹³⁴ Nevertheless, by and large, as Gary Cross argues, "by the 1920s most French recognized that a regulated flow of foreign workers was essential to French prosperity." Moreover it was "... agreed that this meant eliminating as much as possible the entry of 'undesirables', i.e., colonial and Chinese labor, and securing regular streams of selected European workers."¹¹³⁵

As Dewitte notes, this choice for European immigrants ahead of non-European labour showed the importance of racial ideas. For employers

l'ordre social français courant sans doute plus de risques au contact des travailleurs italiens ou polonais, très politisés, mieux organisés, moins malléables que les coloniaux. L'argument ethnique est quant à lui déterminant: des éléments 'trop distincts du reste de la population' risquent provoquer un racisme de retour de la part des travailleurs français.¹¹³⁶

Dewitte acknowledges that the belief that colonial labour was of poor standard and the shortage of manpower in the colonies were also factors in the choice, but they were secondary to concerns over the impact of non-whites in French society.¹¹³⁷

It wasn't simply the "otherness" of colonial peoples that rendered them undesirable as immigrants. Elisa Camiscioli has persuasively argued that in the debates over immigration, the immigrants were viewed as essential, not simply to replace the French war dead in the fields and in the factories, but also in the task of repopulating

1133 Cavalier, *Après Guerre*, p. 18, p. 24

1134 Schor, *L'Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 83.

1135 Gary Cross, "Toward Social Peace and Prosperity: The Politics of Immigration in France during the Era of World War I" in *French Historical Studies*, 11-4 (1980) p. 610, p. 619.

1136 Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, p. 19.

1137 Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, p. 19.

France.¹¹³⁸ France needed single men who could marry a Frenchwoman and spare her from the spectre of celibacy enforced by the slaughter of young Frenchmen on the Western Front, but only if they fitted the correct racial profile.¹¹³⁹

The most desirable immigrants were seen as the Italians, the Poles and the Spanish as they were considered the easiest to assimilate and they would not alter the racial composition of France too greatly. In addition, it was hoped that they retain the fecundity and commitment to hard work and the family that existed in their home countries.¹¹⁴⁰ For Jules Amar, what made Italians the best choice for migrant work in France was racial and cultural affinity. Italians were, incontestably, the workers closest to the French in terms of spirit “et la tendance à contracter des habitudes soeurs. [...] Par la race, par la force héréditaire d’une culture semblable, ils possèdent des éléments d’affinité qui les cimentent, plus que tout autre peuple, à notre édifice social, sans laisser voir les joints.”¹¹⁴¹ A report by the Commissions départementales de la Natalité concluded that Italians and Spaniards were the quickest to assimilate, with the Poles not far behind. Armenians, Levantines and central-European Jews however had a “mentality very different from that of the French population” and assimilation would require several generations to occur. As for North Africans, their assimilation was “nearly impossible”.¹¹⁴² In 1924, the eminent paediatrician and founder member of the French Society of Eugenics, Eugène Apert, called for a total block on the immigration of “des Noirs et des Jaunes, des Blancs de pays non frontaliers, des très jeunes, des malades” making an explicit link between those who were undesirable on racial grounds and those who were sick or too young.¹¹⁴³

This is not to say that it was considered safe to allow other Europeans to enter France freely. The pronatalist campaigner Albert Troullier argued that

immigration cannot be the primary means of fighting the national danger of depopulation. It is only a temporary remedy, and a perilous one at that. Immigration should only allow us to wait for the re-

1138 Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” esp. pp. 594-607.

1139 Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” p. 595, p. 602.

1140 Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” pp. 595-596, p. 606.

1141 Amar, *Organisation Physiologique du Travail*, pp. 205-6

1142 Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” p. 605.

1143 Carol, *Histoire de l’Eugenisme en France*, p. 185.

establishment of French demographic power, without modifying the special characteristics of the race.¹¹⁴⁴

Troullier likened the introduction of immigrants to a blood transfusion. “There exist actual blood types and one cannot, without great danger, mix the blood of different and *incompatible* groups”.¹¹⁴⁵ Pierre Mille made a similar argument on a cultural rather than racial basis, arguing that despite the need for more people, immigration could only happen in moderation or it would overwhelm the French way of life.¹¹⁴⁶ The argument in favour of peace made in *La Vague* by three of the French delegates who attended the Kienthal conference was also based on the fear that foreigners could ruin the French nation. “La France s’épuise de plus en plus. Elle risque de devenir la proie des étrangers ou de n’être plus qu’une expression géographique.”¹¹⁴⁷ In his book, *L’Avenir de la race*, A.-L Galéot raised a similar spectre. Having described the dangers of having a smaller population than other countries, describes a depopulated France: “des campagnes sans paysans, des usines à demi peuplées de techniciens et d’ouvriers étrangers, une finance cosmopolite, un commerce peu à peu envahi par les gens du dehors”.¹¹⁴⁸ Depopulation didn’t simply involve a diminishing of French power, it involved a diminishing of the French race. Galéot was unusual in fearing the impact of European more than colonial immigration, arguing that he preferred it when French companies hired colonial non-white labour ahead of foreign European labour as it meant that at least their wages stayed within the empire. This did not mean that he had an unusually high opinion of colonial workers, as he later argued that the French race deserved better than numerical decline. “On peut souhaiter celui-ci pour des races inférieures, occupant inutilement la surface du globe, sans bénéfice pour la reste de l’humanité.”¹¹⁴⁹

Those who advocated immigration were torn between fear of the damage that large scale immigration might do to French society, and the French race, yet a depopulated France risked its very existence. These two currents of thought are illustrated by an

1144 quoted in Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” p. 603.

1145 quoted in Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” p. 601 Emphasis in the original.

1146 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 June, 1916.

1147 *La Vague*, 4 April, 1918.

1148 Galéot, *L’Avenir de la race*, pp. 21-22.

1149 Galéot, *L’Avenir de la race*, pp. 158-159, p. 314.

article by Jean Hennessy in *L'Œuvre* where he argued that while workers might temporarily enjoy the benefits of a restricted workforce, in the longer term they risked turning France into a European equivalent of Australia or New Zealand countries that Hennessy argued were nearly closed to immigration, but because of that susceptible to invasion from “des prolifiques Asiatiques.” However, at the same time as advocating that workers be educated to except immigration, he argued that it needed to be regulated so that “une seule race ne déforme pas le notre”.¹¹⁵⁰

In the debates over immigration, the example of the United States loomed large. In general the United States was consistently seen as a negative example of racial mixing. One writer who had applauded the contribution of colonial troops was Rosny, but in 1916 writing in *L'Illustration*, he argued that, after the Allies had won the war “les Etats-Unis n'échapperont pas à la plus sinistre guerre sociale. Les hommes des trusts seront balayés. La guerre des races suivra, plus sinistre encore.”¹¹⁵¹ In offering an advocacy of importing Chinese workers, Laffranque felt impelled to respond to potential criticism that these workers might result in social disturbances, like in the United States. He said this need not happen as long as the Chinese were supervised by men from their own race and obliged to return home when their contracts expired.¹¹⁵² The idea that races were incapable of coexisting in the United States was surely one that applied to France as well. In 1922, the deputy Auguste Isaac linked fears over depopulation with those of racial mixing, with the United States once again offered as an example to be wary of.

If the white race restrains [its births], who will guarantee us that the yellow race will follow its example? Who will assure us that the black race will sacrifice the fecundity which, to cite but one example, is a cause of anxiety for whites in the United States.¹¹⁵³

There were dissenting opinions. Daniel Lesueur's poem offered a more positive perspective on racial interaction in the United States.

Etats-Unis, creuset formidable des races!

¹¹⁵⁰ *L'Œuvre*, 10 October, 1916

¹¹⁵¹ quoted in Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 684.

¹¹⁵² AN F/12/8024, 1 February, 1916.

Jeune univers, qui fit fleurir en tes espaces
 Une nouvelle humanité
Le Monde en tes sillons lança tant d'énergie
Que ton Peuple naissant, moisson bientôt surgie
 Eut pour premier cri: Liberté!¹¹⁵⁴

Lesueur was an exceptional case though.

Henriette Perrin's childrens book portrayed the United States as a exotic mix of races, in a largely positive fashion – the book itself was aimed at enthusing French children about their new ally. The book told the story of trip to America by two French schoolchildren, Lise and Jean, and their parents. They visit New York, where they go to a restaurant. “Le service est fait par des nègres, par de vrai nègres, bien noirs, qui ont l'air empressés et assez gentils.”¹¹⁵⁵ Perrin describes New-York as a great cosmopolitan city, the melting pot of all the races and all the civilisations, with every language and colour of skin. She recounts the astonishment of Lise at encountering a little negro baby wearing a lace hood inside a white pram. Lise was even more astonished when she met some Chinese children, “oui, des vrais enfants chinois, tels qu'on les représente sur les éventails et les potiches.” Despite the generally positive tone, Perrin is clearly emphasising these exotic scenes as something to wonder at rather than imitate. The point is made explicitly when Lise and Jean saw the Chinese children eating rice with their bread “ce qui les amusa beaucoup, mais ne leur donna aucune envie de les imiter.”¹¹⁵⁶

Other writers argued that even if the United States had managed to successfully build a nation, that did not mean that France could follow a similar pattern. Galéot argued that the impact of permanent immigration need not be too damaging to a new country, without a clearly defined national character, like America. Indeed it could even be advantageous if the immigrants were of a “race suffisamment douée”. For an old nation, desiring to conserve their national characteristics, a similar influx of foreigners risked denationalisation. Galéot believed that certain French regions had already been

1153 quoted in Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” p. 598.

1154 Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis*, p. 696.

1155 Perrin, *Nos Alliés les Américains*, p. 16.

affected by this phenomenon, notably Marseille.¹¹⁵⁷ Ferri-Pisani argued that the United States had managed to achieve national unity by enforcing strict measures of cultural conformity. He quoted an American career soldier describing how “[u]ne loi rigoureuse nous a habitués dès l’enfance à la soumission anglo-saxonne.” This allowed the Americans to transform all its myriad races into yankees.¹¹⁵⁸ That this applied only to the white races of the United States though is illustrated by Ferri-Pisani’s description of New York. He described all the various European peoples in the city as rational peoples, then mentioned that there are also “d’étranges prophètes, aux visages de fakirs, venus tout droit de l’Inde mystérieuse”.¹¹⁵⁹

If anything, encountering American soldiers may have encouraged French suspicion of non-white peoples. The Lyon police reported frequent brawls between American soldiers and Indochinese and Chinese workers. These incidents were only minor, but were escalating. Because the Americans were so well-liked, due to their noble bearing as well as their generosity, the French population was now exhibiting contempt for the Chinese and Indochinese. It was advised that the Americans should be kept apart from non-white contingents.¹¹⁶⁰

The extent to which the issue of female and immigrant labour was a priority for the men in power can be exaggerated. In 1917 the Congress of the *Association Nationale d’Expansion Économique*, a body made up of the industrial and agricultural elite, gave a report containing seven pages of recommendations on how to reconstitute the French economy after the war, which made no mention of women workers at all. For them the lesson that workers had to learn was that “l’amélioration du sort des travailleurs est liée au développement de l’emploi des moyens mécaniques et à l’intensité du rendement du travail.” Similarly, a five-page report on agriculture failed to mention women; again mechanisation was considered the main issue.¹¹⁶¹ At the next session, the minister for commerce, Clémentel, spoke about wartime organisation of labour. In a 14-page speech, women were only mentioned briefly, when he noted

1156 Perrin, *Nos Alliés les Américains*, p. 22.

1157 Galéot, *L’Avenir de la race*, p. 132

1158 Ferri-Pisani, *L’Intérêt et l’idéal des États-Unis*, p. 111, pp. 111-113.

1159 Ferri-Pisani, *L’Intérêt et l’idéal des États-Unis*, p. 127.

1160 AN F/7/13360, Police Report, 14 September, 1917.

1161 AN F/12/8001, 26 March, 1917.

(without further comment) that the proportion of women in the workplace was higher than before the war.¹¹⁶² In the deliberations of the departmental sub-committees for economic action in the Le Mans region, they wanted every available soldier who wasn't fighting to be available to work in the fields at harvest time. In industry they wanted some reforms of regulations; they also wanted more work to be done by prisoners of war. There was no mention of female labour, or request for immigrant labour.¹¹⁶³ When *La Bataille* addressed the question of the post-war workforce it dealt with Taylorism and the length of the working week; women's employment issues were not considered as crucial.¹¹⁶⁴ Amongst the trade unions in the Haute-Garonne, in the immediate aftermath of the war there was a concern for the newly unemployed women. However from then onwards, both women and foreign labour disappeared almost entirely from the agenda, while the debate moved on to class-consciousness and the 8-hour day.¹¹⁶⁵ On the other side of the political spectrum, Paul Négrier wrote on the economic future of France, advocating the modernisation of French industry. Négrier was an avowed modernist, but in his criticism of old systems of working he revealed that he retained traditional ideas on the organisation of society. For him, the problem with old working practices was that they were not capable of adequately rewarding "un jeune ouvrier travaillant activement et augmentant sa production, avec l'espoir de procurer à sa femme et à ses enfants une plus grande quantité de bien-être."¹¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

The utilisation of European immigrant labour had been a regular recourse for French employers for a long time preceding the First World War. The war itself temporarily closed off some traditional avenues for obtaining workers, making Italian and Belgian labour harder to acquire, but the basic position of white immigrant labour in France

1162 AN F/12/8001, 26 March, 1917.

1163 AN F/12/7999.

1164 *La Bataille*, 27 September, 1916.

1165 AN F/7/ 12986/1, 14 April, 1918.

1166 Paul Négrier, *Organisation technique et commerciale des usines d'après les méthodes américaines (système Taylor)*, Paris: Dunod & Pinat (1918) p. 3

remained similar. Immigrants were considered useful, an adequate substitute for French workers where necessary, but still undesirable and deserving of suspicion.

The greater demands for foreign workers to cover for mobilised Frenchmen, as well as the lack of availability of European labour led to an experimental large-scale hiring during the war of non-white workers. This experiment was not judged a success, as racial suspicion and incomprehension hindered both the hiring and utilisation of colonial workers. A combination of popular antipathy and low regard for the responsibility and aptitude of non-white workers led to colonial contingents being restricted to working in large teams and living in isolated barracks, which allowed little opportunity for them to prove themselves as workers or to break down prejudices. This low opinion was not restricted to metropolitan France, but extended to the colonies such as West Africa where, as Conklin argues, the French administrators after the war requisitioned forced labour because they “never doubted that Africans were lazy and had to be forced to work”.¹¹⁶⁷

Female labour was neither a new phenomenon during the war nor a new concern. In January 1914, E. Thomas wrote that

Par comparaison avec les chiffres d’il y a quarante-cinq ans, la population féminine laborieuse a doublé. Ce n’est pas un signe de prospérité nationale, ni surtout la preuve que le foyer familial est plus à l’aise que autrefois.¹¹⁶⁸

There was a great continuity throughout the conflict over the concept that there were jobs that women were best suited to, and the sort of terms used to describe them. A. A. Bonnefoy in 1913 found no contradiction in arguing that the moment had arrived to incorporate into France’s laws, customs and practices the principle of social, economic, civil and political unity between women and men but also that

Ces femmes nouvelles savent que le rôle le plus beau, le plus noble qui puisse leur être attribué consiste à être épouse et mères. Elles aspirent à remplir cette double mission dans toute sa plénitude, en exerçant les droits qui sont le corollaire de leurs devoirs.¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶⁷ Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights” p. 440.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Le Petit Marseillais*, 3 January, 1914.

Bonnefoy acknowledged that circumstances might preclude women from following their desired path towards marriage and motherhood and urged that they be able to earn a living in a manner that conformed to their aptitudes and their conventions. Claiming to have done extensive research into the area of work and gender, Bonnefoy came to a simple conclusion : “il convient de donner a l’homme les carrières actives, et à la femme les carrières sédentaires.” He had earlier defined what jobs he considered sedentary as office work which demanded only the qualities of order and exactitude.¹¹⁷⁰

In 1916, offering the views of the Lyon Chamber of Commerce, Morel argued that due to the veritable dearth of men after the war that women should take over employment in public administration, freeing men to work in commerce and industry.¹¹⁷¹ Also in 1916 the Calvados committee of economic action suggested that the three most obvious areas where women could be used to replace men were: cleaning (which could be done by maids), nurses (because women had proved their competence and devotion in the Red Cross) and secretarial work which could be done by women or adolescents.¹¹⁷²

In 1919, the parliamentary committee on female work argued that men should be obliged to take on the work that only they were capable of doing, “aux femmes furent dévolus les travaux que l’expérience avait montrés susceptibles de leur être confiés.”¹¹⁷³ Just as before the war, women’s work was seen as unskilled, undemanding and less valuable. Though a considerable number of new jobs were now classified as such and hence now available to women, the discourses that governed the employment of women and their relative place in society remained largely intact.

The limited impact that colonial and female workers had made in persuading Frenchmen of their ability to perform skilled or high-quality work is summed up by

1169 A. A. Bonnefoy, *Place aux femmes! Les carrières féminines administrative et liberales*. Paris: Fayard (1913) pp. 6-7.

1170 Bonnefoy, *Place aux femmes!* p. 7, p. 13, p. 8.

1171 Chambre de Commerce de Lyon, *L’Après-Guerre*, Lyon: Rey (1916) pp. 4-10, p. 11.

1172 AN F/12/8004, 12 February, 1916.

1173 Comité du travail féminin, *Protection et utilisation de la main d’œuvre féminine*, p. 6.

the comments of Louis Duval-Arnould, the president of the pro-family league *La Plus Grande Famille*, writing in 1926

The recruitment of European workers is more valuable than that of colonials, which was attempted at the end of the war and now seems to have been abandoned. The quality of [colonial] labour was revealed to be feminine, no doubt the result of profound differences of mores and climate.¹¹⁷⁴

For Duval-Arnould, “feminine” labour could be unproblematically written off as inadequate, whether performed by women or feminised men, while colonial workers were unable to surmount their different backgrounds to do the work of a (European) man.

1174 Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’” p. 606.

Conclusion

For France's colonial subjects the war had the least impact on how they were viewed by the metropolitan population. Every attempt was made to minimise contact between colonial soldiers and workers and French civilians. The recruitment and utilisation of non-white peoples, as well as the summary way they were sent home at the end of the conflict were informed by popular and scientific views of their essential nature that were maintained consistently throughout the war. Colonial women were almost entirely absent from France during the war, and appeared primarily in discourses highlighting the erotic or backward nature of the countries in France's empire.

The descriptions of Black Africans took two primary forms, firstly emphasising their childish nature, generous but also credulous, irrational and impulsive and secondly emphasising their fearless, fearsome nature in combat. These views were expressed by those both hostile and favourable to the empire and to the utilisation of colonial soldiers. Pierre Mille was a journalist described by Alphonse S  ch   as one of the writers with the most understanding of the psychology of Blacks in France, and also a self-professed "indig  nophile convaincu" who would go on to become President of the Soci  t   des Auteurs Coloniaux after the war.¹¹⁷⁵ Given these credentials, then Mille's opinions must have carried some weight.

He argued that, out of combat, the African was a chatterbox, impulsive, easily offended, and subject to blind rages. Not only that but he was a scatterbrain, a daydreamer, and na  ve as well. Like a thick-headed schoolboy, he would try unsuccessfully to retain the most simple orders, only to return two hours later desperate and contrite saying "My lieutenant, what you say? ... Me forget all." He was also puerile in his games, his songs, his dances and his arguments. But he was brave, brave to the point of folly.¹¹⁷⁶ The motif of infantilism recurs repeatedly, with the comparison to a schoolboy, with references to the puerility of African culture as well as the immature characteristics and use of language.

¹¹⁷⁵ S  ch  , *Les Noirs*, p. 37, *Le Petit Marseillais*, 25 July, 1917. For an examination of Mille's colonial literature, see Hargreaves, *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction*.

¹¹⁷⁶ S  ch  , *Les Noirs*, pp. 37-38.

If Mille's portrayal of Africans offers a relatively benign perspective on the backwardness of African society, others placed more emphasis on its perceived brutality. While this brutality was generally considered acceptable, and even desirable, when it could be utilised against the enemy, it was the subject of great disquiet internally. This led to stringent attempts to keep non-white soldiers and workers under surveillance, and in particular to keep them away from French women. The idea of non-whites as savages was largely unchanged by the war, and was often mentioned in contexts far removed from the debates over the empire, or its populations. For example, Fénelon Gibon, the Secretary of L'Association pour le repos et la sanctification du Dimanche arguing in favour of Sunday rest spoke in passing of "savages as ferocious as those from Australia".¹¹⁷⁷ Similarly, among a list of maxims designed to encourage French soldiers to swim was one that demanded "L'homme sauvage sait NAGER et toi homme civilisé sais-tu?"¹¹⁷⁸

The perceived savagery of French African troops in combat was repeated throughout the war. While it only took a few months of the war before newspapers abandoned the descriptions of French troops joyfully charging towards the Germans, brandishing their bayonets; similar descriptions of colonial soldiers were still common in 1918. The belief that African troops were incomparable in the assault due to their love of battle, their reckless bravery and their preference for hand-to-hand combat was shared by military strategists and popular opinion alike. While North Africans were generally regarded as somewhat more developed as a race than sub-Saharan Africans, in terms of military performance, there was little difference.

By contrast, the Indochinese were regarded very differently, being seen as having much more feminine qualities than Africans. They were believed to have less physical strength and less courage, but were defter with their hands. Nonetheless, they were also regarded as being more like children than (white) adults.

¹¹⁷⁷ Fénelon Gibon, *Les Bienfaits du Dimanche*, Paris: Notre Dame des Anges (1917) p. 4. From the context, it is clear that Gibon was referring to the aboriginal population of Australia.

¹¹⁷⁸ Emile Menin, *Maximes et Leçons sur la Natation*, Paris: "Le Jeune Soldat" (1916) p. 1. Emphasis in the original.

Just as French writers emphasised the childlike nature of non-white individuals, so they referred to other races as in a state of infancy. Just as experts on assimilation argued that certain races required little time to blend in with the French, but other less developed races needed much longer, so other races were also seen to be at different stages of progress towards civilisation. Azan talked about the French and the North Africans and “all the difference which separates the two races in their different stages of civilization.”¹¹⁷⁹ In a typical example, Albert Lebrun quoted the senator Henry Berenger approvingly.

La France en armes a compté parmi ses meilleures troupes de choc les formations indigènes et les contingents coloniaux. Le sang nouveau des races jeunes a coulé à flot lorsqu’il lui a fallu tout à coup s’offrir avec le vieux sang gaulois pour la défense et le maintien de la patrie menacée. Aussi la même sépulture abrite-t-elle aujourd’hui depuis la capitale jusqu’à la frontière, nos fils de la métropole et nos enfants des colonies.¹¹⁸⁰

The customary references are made to the shock value of the colonial troops, but the stress is on the “new blood” of the “enfants” from the colonies compared to the “old blood” of France. Another common adjective used to describe non-whites and to emphasise their backwardness was “fruste”, unsophisticated or coarse. Gaillet said of Coulibaly that “L’extérieur est fruste, mais le cœur est bon.”¹¹⁸¹ Augustin Bernard argued that:

Les musulmans de l’Afrique du Nord se rendent compte que leurs intérêts économiques sont liés aux nôtres et, si frustes que soient leurs cerveaux, ils nous sont reconnaissants d’un certain nombre de bienfaits que nous leur avons apportés.¹¹⁸²

The conception of nations and races on a road towards maturity and civilisation recurred in various different contexts. It could work in reverse: civilisations could also regress, and this was often suggested in respect of Germany. It provided a liberal justification for France’s colonial expansion; as the colonial textbook *Moussa and Gignola* argued, the more civilised French could offer instruction and example to the

1179 Cooke, “Paul Azan and L’Armée Indigène Nord-Africaine” pp. 134.

1180 *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 1 July, 1916.

1181 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 19 December, 1917.

1182 *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 7 July, 1916.

Africans and hasten their path to progress.¹¹⁸³ William Ponty, the Governor General of Senegal wrote in May 1914 in a circular

Even if Africans quickly forgot the French words they had learned at school, they would not forget the ideas they conveyed, [...] ideas that are our own and whose use endows us with our moral, social and economic superiority. [That] will little by little transform these barbarians of yesterday into disciples and agents.¹¹⁸⁴

The prime example of progress through imitating the West was held to be Japan. For Giraud:

le Japon s'est, depuis 1868, mis résolument à l'école des grandes puissances européennes. Jamais aucun peuple, en un aussi bref espace de temps, n'a aussi complètement transformé sa vie matérielle, politique et sociale.¹¹⁸⁵

Yet this transformation still left Japan a long way from being seen as on a par with Western civilisation. When the Germans criticised Britain for the dangerous step of bringing Japan into the war, the *Dépêche* did not respond by arguing of Japan's right to enter the war but by pointing out the Germans own failure in allying with the degenerate Turks. In the years after the war French pronatalists raised the spectre of the "yellow peril", the risk that the high birth rates in the Far East might disturb the "equilibrium of the races".¹¹⁸⁶

The length of time it took to achieve civilisation was measured in centuries rather than decades. The *Petit Marseillais* argued that the ability to learn and to apply acquired knowledge was retarded in Russia compared to the West because Russia had only joined the civilised world in the 18th century. *L'Eclair du Midi* dismissed two centuries of civilised behaviour in the Ottoman Empire as only a cloak for their true nature.¹¹⁸⁷ Y.-E. Norvès argued this explicitly in *L'Ouest-Éclair*. "Rien n'est plus immuable que l'Islam. Il faut des siècles pour transformer les races et aucune race n'est moins 'assimiable' que le sont les races nord-africaines." Just as *L'Eclair du*

1183 Sonolet, Pérès, *Moussa et Gi-gla*, p. 83.

1184 Alice L. Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914" in *The American Historical Review*, 103-2 (1998) p. 429.

1185 Giraud, *Histoire de la grande guerre*, p. 21.

1186 Camiscioli, "Producing Citizens, Reproducing the 'French Race'" p. 599.

1187 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 7 March, 1914, *L'Eclair du Midi*, 27 May, 1917.

Midi warned that the appearance of civilised behaviour amongst the Turks could not be relied upon, so Norvès cautioned on the wily ways of the North Africans.

Mais il n'y a pas d'individus dans d'autres peuples (si ce n'est chez les Israélites) qui prennent avec plus de facilité, avec un sens plus précis de l'imitation, l'apparence, la manière d'agir – toute extérieure et superficielle – habituelles aux peuples auxquels ils se trouvent mêlés hors de leur pays.”¹¹⁸⁸

Guignard, commenting on Western reactions to the dancing they encountered in Africa, pointed out that the waltz and the polka appeared scandalous to the savages of the interior, although they were now familiar to the “educated natives” of the ports.¹¹⁸⁹ This clearly equates the term savages with unfamiliarity with Western civilization. However, the fact that Guignard wrote the phrase “educated natives” in English highlights the implication that these educated natives are still primitive compared to the genuinely educated whites or even that the entire concept of educated natives was a foreign concept, alien to French thought.

Maurice Violette, a socialist deputy spoke in ringing terms of how France would appear in Africa

as a great liberating power [to] peoples still immersed in barbarism [who would] draw on our reasoning, our methods and our tastes, and, steeped in our genius without dreaming of an impossible assimilation, they would continue magnificently France overseas ... to produce men in the economic and moral sense of the word ... capable ... of integrating themselves into the movement of universal exchanges, this is the task.¹¹⁹⁰

For all this progress though, assimilation was impossible.

The time it was believed necessary to allow the backward races to develop allowed the French to elide differences between assimilation and association.. If the progress of these races was going to take centuries and their assimilation many generations then in practical terms it was irrelevant.

Responding to suggestions that some political rights should be given to France's colonial subjects, Bernard argued that the French spirit naturally sought to regard all

1188 *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 23 January, 1918.

1189 Guignard, *Troupes noires*, p. 55.

the inhabitants of all France's possessions as equals but that this was premature. Although he only argued for a postponement of this equality, it was clear that he thought that it should be a long time before it happened.

Héritiers de la Rome antique, nous voulons que les peuples de notre empire colonial puissent dire un jour: *Cuncti gens una sumus* (Nous sommes tous un même peuple). Cette généreuse pensée est si profondément ancrée dans l'esprit français que rien ne l'en déracinera. Mais ce jour, Messieurs, n'est pas encore venu.¹¹⁹¹

The generous inclusiveness that Bernard spoke of was not greatly evident at the end of the war. As Schor argues

En effet, pendant les années de conflit, ils s'étaient habitués à une vision quasi manichéenne de non-Français: les uns étaient des ennemis, des traîtres ou des espions qui minaient le pays par l'intérieur – les neutres, souvent assimilés à des mercantis qui avaient profité de la guerre pour s'enrichir, n'étaient pas beaucoup plus estimés -, les autres étaient les courageux alliés qui avaient volé au secours d'une France injustement assaillie. Accessoirement, dans certaines régions, les Français avaient fait connaissance d'une main-d'œuvre immigrée, coloniale souvent, appelée pour pallier le manque des bras et généralement très critiquée pour sa médiocrité. Le rétablissement de la paix entraîna le départ progressif des soldats alliés. Les Français se retrouvèrent donc en tête à tête forcé avec des étrangers qu'ils redoutaient ou méprisaient.¹¹⁹²

The same theme recurred. Moral worth was based upon behaviour during the war, filtered through pre-war preconceptions. The only true claim to approval was if you had contributed to the victory, or been harmed by the scourge of war. This applied to white Europeans working or fighting in France just as much as it did to non-whites, and French views of other European nations as well as the United States were strongly affected by the roles performed by those nations during the war.

However, although each country's decision to ally with France, oppose it or remain neutral was the primary factor in determining how they'd be described, the views the French expressed on the characteristics of each nation continued to show significant consistency with the prewar period. The Germans had been considered efficient,

1190 Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights" p. 433.

1191 *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 7 July, 1916.

1192 Schor, *L'Opinion Française et les Étrangers*, p. 69.

organised and industrious as well as callous, uncultured and militaristic before the war, and those judgements informed how their actions were understood throughout the conflict. Thus the atrocities that were perpetrated by German soldiers, and the many more that were rumoured to have occurred, were consistently attributed to an orchestrated policy, rather than undisciplined breaches of conduct. The bitterness of the war did lead to a great increase in the vituperation levelled at the Germans, but most of the themes had been presaged in the French response to the Franco-Prussian war and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.

Similarly the motivations of Allied governments and the performances of their armies were also understood within the context of prewar relations. Allied soldiers were generally welcomed onto French soil, but in order to maintain their popularity they also needed to demonstrate they were contributing to France's victory, and without exploiting the local populace, either financially or sexually.

Though there were some similarities in the ways in which white and non-white foreigners could be portrayed, there were also major differences. White peoples, even the hated Germans or the despised Russians, were never considered as uncivilised or as backward as non-white people. White foreigners were also considered to be ultimately capable of assimilating into French society, in a way in which non-whites were not. This was part of a broader discourse that saw racial differences between peoples of the same colour as based on both historical and racial factors, where historical and cultural factors could mitigate racial difference. By contrast, racial differences based on colour were seen as well-nigh insurmountable.

As for the insurmountable divide that Barbusse posited between the trenches and the home front, while such a divide certainly did exist, it was not the primary fissure that separated France. The most important division was based on suffering and sacrifice and both men and women could fall on either side of that divide. While the intensity of feelings aroused by the war did add extra bitterness to male critiques of female behaviour, the criticisms they made were generally of faults that had traditionally been seen as feminine, such as being too frivolous or overly concerned with their appearance. Women were more often praised for their heroism in hospitals, factories and the fields than they were criticised for failing to perform their allotted role. Sexual

unease was a significant factor, but again it was one that was usually understood within a well-established discourse that featured predatory males exploiting weak women. Sexual misbehaviour was also believed to be much more common in the major cities, and Paris in particular, than in the country as a whole.

One issue in which the war did make a big impact on was that of France's demographic situation. The massive loss of French life did provide the impetus for a huge debate as to how to improve the nation's birth-rate. Some observers did suggest that the problem was linked to aberrant behaviour by women, who were refusing to follow their true maternal calling. However, much more common were explanations that focused on practical obstacles towards having children, such as the expense involved, and the necessity of working for many women. Despite much discussion and some legislation in the aftermath of the war, French population growth remained stubbornly sluggish, which suggests that the problem may not have been the priority for the mass of the population as it was for the elite.

The war did not represent a turning point, because gender relations are always changing, some people always fear the disappearance of traditional ideas and some people are always attempting to re-establish what they believe to be the norm. This was the case before, during and after the war. In that sense the war represents not a 'turning point', merely an episode in an ongoing series of changes and struggles that people made sense of in the framework of some beliefs they believed to be fixed.

In the workplace, colonial labour was undervalued, partly because the individual qualities of colonial workers were not highly regarded, and partly because social concerns led to them primarily being employed in large, unwieldy groups. Though national authorities made regular attempts to bolster the foreign workforce in an attempt to counter France's shortages of manpower, they were often frustrated by unwillingness by local authorities and employers to request that labour, stating their preference for French soldiers or prisoners of war as employees. When the acute shortage of workers did persuade local authorities to utilise colonial labour, it was generally badly received and considered a poor substitute for French labour. The example of the employment of foreign, and particularly Chinese, workers in the maritime ports shows that issues over language, morality, productivity and race could

all combine to create an atmosphere of hostility between French workers and employers and colonial workers. Immigrant labour was utilised slightly more in regions close to the French border, particularly in the South and South East.

Colonial labour, along with white immigrants and women workers tended to be grouped together as non-skilled labour. This was crucial as the French economy mechanised, in a process which privileged skill as a primary factor in determining suitability for employment. All three groups, but particularly colonial men and white women were seen as lacking the adaptability and the technical ability to undertake specialised, professional work, but were seen as competent at routine, generic work.

Throughout the war, both in industry and in agriculture, although women were lauded for their attempts to substitute for male labour, there were also concerns over their capacity to undertake the work, and the possible deleterious effect that overwork might have on their health and their maternal role. The positions which women were seen to be fulfilling admirably tended to be jobs which could be seen as traditionally women's work, such as nursing and sewing.

Throughout the war, cartoon advertising depicted traditional stereotypes. One of the most common examples is the dental product Dentol, whose commercials portrayed the merits of their product in the trenches and at the rear. Soldiers of various nationalities were depicted in familiar terms. The English used Dentol to maintain their immaculate appearance, while the French fought still better aided by its magic.¹¹⁹³ The Russians, then still on the allied side, were portrayed as brave, but savage when they ran out of ammunition and launched an attack with their teeth. Lest any of its potential customers should doubt the veracity of this episode, Dentol referred to news reports of this happening in their advert.¹¹⁹⁴ Dentol also portrayed the popular image of the captured Prussian at the mercy of a French colonial soldier, by contrasting the black figure with teeth gleaming in a huge smile and the German whose near-toothless mouth he was holding open.¹¹⁹⁵

1193 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 10 November, 1915, 9 February, 1916.

1194 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 20 October, 1915.

1195 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 22 December, 1915. Another Dentol advertisement played on the same theme, asking "Why do blacks have such white teeth?" and attributing it to Dentol. *L'Ouest-Éclair*, 10

Dentol also used traditionalist images of the home front. One cartoon was captioned “Les deux grands amours d’une bonne mère: son enfant et son DENTOL”¹¹⁹⁶ Others depicted a pretty young woman knitting and a teething baby wanting Dentol.¹¹⁹⁷ When men and women interacted, it was also in a very conventional manner. A female nurse was portrayed as offering Dentol as an example of her caring role, while a mother offered it as a present to her grateful son as he left for the front.¹¹⁹⁸ Dentol’s advertisements show the importance of both race and gender, but betray little modification of traditional concepts.

Both women and foreigners gained credit for where they were seen as contributing to the war effort, and were criticised harshly when they did not. But both were seen to be contributing most significantly when they fulfilled roles that were in keeping with prewar ideas. Thus women gained most credit for their stoic support for their husbands and children at the front, for their efforts in nursing and charity and for raising the next generation of soldiers. Colonial subjects achieved their acclaim by unleashing the uncivilised and ferocious side of their character on the Germans, while humbly submitting to the guidance of their French superiors the rest of the time. The magnitude of the effort made by French soldiers during the war was such that for contemporaries any other effort was likely to pale in comparison. As Noiriel states, “In the interwar period, virtually every xenophobic text made some mention to the French sacrifice during the First World War.”¹¹⁹⁹ At the same time though, the conservative and nationalistic *Union Nationale des Combattants* called for a reduction in the formalities involved in gaining naturalisation for foreign subjects who had served in the French army.¹²⁰⁰

February, 1916.

1196 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 14 September, 1917.

1197 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 22 February, 1918, 27 February, 1918.

1198 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 1 March, 1916, 15 March, 1916.

1199 Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot*, p. 202.

1200 Bonnet, *Les Pouvoirs Publics Français et l’Immigration dans l’Entre Deux Guerres*, p. 69.

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